

HINDUISM

PAST AND PRESENT

WITH AN ACCOUNT OF
*RECENT HINDU REFORMERS AND A BRIEF
COMPARISON BETWEEN HINDUISM
AND CHRISTIANITY*

BY
J MURRAY MITCHELL M A LI D

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INTRODUCTORY NOTE

THE title of this little work is *Hinduism Past and Present*. Hinduism is so exceedingly vast and complex that a full discussion of the subject would require a large volume or rather many volumes.

My desire has been to produce if possible a book which should be sufficiently correct to satisfy the Orientalist and yet short and simple enough to attract the ordinary reader.

The main difficulty has been in the compression into a small space of superabundant materials. It would have been easier to present a larger work, but brevity was imperative. Still leading facts and principles have been dwelt upon I trust at sufficient length to enable the reader to consult with intelligence the Indian writings contained in such a collection as the *Sacred Books of the East*. At all events the work will form a sufficient introduction to the writings on Indian religion of such Continental scholars as Lassen, Roth, Weber, Haug, Barth, Buhler, and others—H. H. Wilson, Max Müller, Monier Williams, Muir, Cowell, &c. in this country—and Professors Whitney and Hopkins in America. Among investigations carried on in India those of Colebrooke stand

pre-eminent A₈ Marathi work, *Hindu dharmatsen swanup*, by the Rev Baba Padmanji, contains much accurate information on Hinduism¹

Indian names often repel readers by their multiplied diacritical marks. With some hesitation it has been resolved to omit the whole of these in the body of the work, but they are given in the Index, with an explanation of their meaning. When the reader is at a loss as to the proper pronunciation of any name, the Index will be a sufficient guide.

¹ A valuable series of books throwing light on Indian belief and life is at present in course of publication by the 'Christian Literature Society for India,' under the editorial care of Dr John Murdoch at Madras.

Very useful works bearing on Indian religion are found in *Trübner's Oriental Series*. Ward on Northern, and Dubois on Southern, Hinduism may still be consulted with advantage.

Dr Claudius Buchanan's *Christian Researches in Asia* aroused immense interest in the beginning of the century, especially his account of the temple and worship of Juggernaut (Jagannath at Puri, the most remarkable place of Indian pilgrimage). Regarding its present condition, the account of Sir W. W. Hunter in his work on Orissa is full of interest.

But we make no attempt to mention all the books on the subject of Hinduism that are of real value.

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INTRODUCTION

I

VERY earnest efforts are made in the present day to investigate the early history of nations and these have been attended with no inconsiderable success. No part of a nation's history is more important than that of its religion and much valuable light has been thrown of late on many systems of faith both of ancient and modern days.

Of the religions of antiquity several that were once flourishing and influential have become entirely extinct. Thus the faiths of Greece Italy and Egypt so celebrated in ancient days have completely passed away. So have the religions of the Celtic Teutonic and Slavonic races as well as those of Syria and Asia Minor. But in the Farther East we come on systems of belief which for reasons which it would be well to inquire into have been possessed of much more stability and which are to be ranked among both ancient and modern creeds. The most remarkable of these are Hinduism and Buddhism. Both of these systems deserve the careful study of educated men.

In this little work we are to be occupied with the consideration of Hinduism—the more ancient of the two.

In this remarkable system we see the oldest surviving form of the faith that was once common to all the branches of the great Aryan, or Indo-European family, to which we ourselves belong. The Vedas of India exhibit that faith in a form which is decidedly more ancient than that presented in the Homeric poems, and many points in classical mythology which would otherwise have remained obscure, receive elucidation from the contents of the Hindu books. Just as a critical acquaintance with Greek and Latin etymology cannot be obtained without a knowledge of Sanskrit, so we may assert that the religions of Greece and Italy cannot be satisfactorily studied without frequent reference to the faith of ancient India.

For these reasons, then, as well as on account of its great antiquity and long-continued existence, Hinduism presents a most interesting subject of investigation. Nor is the interest lessened by the circumstance that the influx of Christian, and Western ideas generally, is telling at the present moment with great power on the faith of India, and threatening not merely to modify, but to destroy it. It has clung tenaciously to life for more than three thousand years, but the end seems now approaching. A stupendous revolution is going on in India which has many striking points of resemblance to the change which took place over the Roman Empire when the ancient Paganism was slowly expiring.

One word as to the spirit in which the study of Hinduism should be carried on. We trust that neither our readers nor we can enter on it with our feelings as little moved as if we were preparing to examine

merely some philosophical or scientific problem. I or we are about to deal with *religion*—with a subject bearing directly on the honour of God and the welfare of human beings. Hinduism is at this moment the creed of a hundred and ninety millions of our brethren. What during its protracted reign of more than three thousand years has it told them of God and man and sin and salvation and heaven and hell? How far has it proved a faithful guide amidst the perplexities of life? What comfort has it supplied to the sorrowful? We have to think of human hearts with all their trembling sensibilities—not of abstract principles and passionless laws. And if as our inquiry proceeds we shall find that Hinduism has often spoken erringly and ill on matters pertaining to the Divine glory and human weal how should it affect us? The Roman poet could boast of the pleasure of being able from the serene temples reared by the teaching of sages¹ to look down on the crowds of men wandering far and wide in the vain quest of truth and joy. Very different from such cynical scorn will be the feeling of one who truly loves his kind. His emotion will resemble that which filled the breast of Him whose name is above every name when ‘He beheld the multitudes and was moved with compassion towards them because they fainted and were scattered abroad as sheep having no shepherd.’

We must further explain that we by no means desire to deal with our subject as if there were a lawsuit between induism and Christianity in which we held a brief for the latter and intended to

¹ *Edita doctrina sapientium templa serena*. —*Lucretius*

press to its fairest consequences every point that is adverse to the opposing party. On the contrary, we feel ourselves in duty bound to do the utmost justice to Hinduism, and to point out its merits as faithfully as its demerits. Time was when non-Christian systems of religion were regarded by Christian writers as simply masses of uncheered falsehood; but such was not the belief either of the Apostles or the early Christian authors. The declaration of St. Paul is that 'God has never left Himself without witness' and that 'the Gentiles, which have not the Law, are a law unto themselves'. Conscience is not wholly extinguished in the human breast: it speaks indeed, often in feeble and faltering accents, but we shall welcome even its faintest whispers when it testifies on behalf of God and goodness.

We shall begin at the beginning and try to study Hinduism chronologically. It is very true that every winding of the great stream has not yet been explored, nor can we fix the precise point where it was joined by such or such a tributary; still, we are tolerably well acquainted with its fountains, with the course which it has hitherto pursued, and the chief alterations it has sustained.

II

When a Hindu is asked what his religion is, he at once replies that it is contained in the *Sastras* or sacred writings,—he does not speak of unwritten tradition as authoritative.¹ What, then, are the

¹ The number of Sanskrit works, as brought to light by the investiga-

accredited sacred writings? The Hindu will generally reply that they are the four Vedas, the six Darśanas or philosophical systems and the eighteen Purāṇas. This sacred literature is exceedingly voluminous. The Vedas contain at least thirty thousand long verses. The philosophical writings with their commentaries are also very extensive. The Purāṇas comprise probably a million and a half of lines without including supplementary treatises called Upa Purāṇas. It follows that very few Hindus are well acquainted with their own Śāstras. Even the most learned Brahman can hardly have read more than a fiftieth part of them.

The Hindus make a distinction between direct and indirect revelation. Certain portions of their literature are classed under the head of *Śruti*—literally that which has been heard. An eternal Divine voice is supposed to have uttered these portions and the favoured few who heard them treasured them up and repeated them for the good of others. They are also said to have been seen by holy men¹. These writings are believed to constitute a direct revelation and are fully authoritative. Other books are classified under the head of *Smṛiti*—literally that which is remembered. No eternal existence is claimed for these; their authority is derived from their being a faithful representation of the sense of the *Śruti*.

There is some resemblance between the distinctions of the Government of India; not less than ten thousand. I am Mr. Lal Mitra holds that the entire number of Sanskrit books (Hindu, Buddhist and Jaina) is not under twenty thousand. The writers he estimates at four thousand.

¹ The words of Amos which he saw (Amos 1. 1).

thus drawn between the two classes of authoritative books, and that which Roman Catholics have stated as existing between the Bible and the Fathers.

In addition to the two kinds of works now mentioned, the Sanskrit language contains multitudes of writings for which inspiration is not claimed, for example, the extensive dramatic literature. Some important works particularly the great heroic poems, the *Ramayana*, and the *Mahabharata*—occupy a sort of middle ground between the fully inspired and uninspired.

Agam, there is an important class of writings, of comparatively late origin, known by the name of *Tantras*. Several writers have claimed an authority for these equal to that of the *Puranas*.

In some cases the philosophical writings have been excluded from the list of inspired books.

It will thus be perceived that there is much uncertainty as to the extent of the Hindu Canon. No Council has ever been called to consider the subject, and the conception of a Church or Pope—an infallible authority in matters of faith—is foreign to the Hindu mind.

The *Śruti* comprises the books known under the name of the *Veda* or *Vedas*. These are now universally admitted to be fully authoritative.

CHAPTER I

THE VEDAS AND VEDIC PERIOD

THE term Veda means *knowledge*¹. Generally four Vedas are mentioned but they are often spoken of as if they constituted one book. They are written in an ancient form of Sanskrit as the Avesta is in a cognate language usually termed Zend. Originally a Veda was understood to consist only of two parts but at a later period a third was added. The first is called Sanhita or Mantra and consists of praises and prayers composed in verse. The second part the Brahmana is chiefly in prose it explains how the Mantras are to be used, the origin and meaning of the rites and the proper mode of performing them. The Brahmanas are thus commentaries on the hymns. The third part of the Veda is contained in the Aranyakas or forest treatises—so called because they were studied by ascetics in the forests. The parts of these which discuss philosophical and religious questions regarding God, the soul the destiny of man &c are termed Upanishads. They are written chiefly in prose partly in verse. It

¹ From the root *vid* to know or see which is etymologically the same as *do* and *video*.

is important to note that the three parts of a Veda are not only very diverse in character, but for the most part different in age. As a rule, the Upanishads are the latest, and much more recent than the Hymns. They are not parts of the Veda proper, but appended disquisitions, which, however, are now deemed the most holy portions of the Veda, and on this account they should not be kept in a dwelling-house, but in a temple. All this implies a sad confounding of things that differ, and it could have been averted only when the sense of the most ancient part of the Veda had been in a great degree forgotten.

When we speak of the Veda and the Vedic religion, we must exclude the Upanishads from consideration. We must also distinguish between the Hymns and the Ritualistic writings, or Brahmanas. The Brahmanas of each Veda are later than the Hymns of the same Veda, and they generally contain a somewhat different theology. When we use the term Veda, then, we shall include only the Hymns. The four divisions of the Veda are called respectively the Rich, or Rig Veda, the Saman, or Sama Veda; the Yajush, or Yajur Veda, and the Atharvana, or Atharva Veda. We need not pay much attention to the second and third. The Sama Veda contains only verses extracted from the Rig Veda, and arranged for the use of certain priests¹ at the chief sacrifices. The Yajur Veda appears in two forms, called the Black and the White (or Taittiriya and Vajasaneyi). It is properly a liturgical work in prose, with hymns, or extracts from hymns interspersed. It also borrows very largely from

¹ The Udgātis

the Rig Veda and contains texts arranged for another class of priests¹. The Atharvāna comes next to the Rig Veda in importance from which about a sixth part of it is taken.

The Rig Veda means the *Veda of praise*. It contains 11000 verses and 1017 complete hymns—or according to another recension, 1028. We must speak with great caution as to the time when these hymns were composed and with still more caution as to the date when they were collected and committed to writing². The oldest hymns may perhaps take us as far back as the year 2000 or 1800 B.C.—say about the age of Abraham.

There is no small diversity of character among the hymns. Some of them are tolerably simple and these may be regarded as the spontaneous utterance of religious sentiment but there is a larger number that are involved laboured and unnatural³. We cannot assert that even the oldest are all simple and childlike. From the first we see the sacerdotal stamp deeply impressed on many, if not most of these compositions. The Rig Veda itself must have been mainly written, and probably wholly arranged by priests and both the selection and arrangement must have been made chiefly with a view to liturgical pur-

¹ The Adhvaryu.

² The art of writing does not seem to have come into use long before the Greek invasion of India in the fourth century B.C. The collection of the hymns may have been from about 1000 B.C.

Whole hymns must remain to us a dead letter says Max Müller. Why? The conviction is growing among scholars that many of them are intentionally obscure.

poses. Even in the days when the first hymns were composed, religion had begun to petrify, forms and rites were coming to be deemed more important than thoughts, feelings, or deeds. The early period of Hinduism thus reveals a tendency which is clearly exhibited throughout the history of religion—to substitute the external for the internal.

It is probable that the Indian branch of the great Aryan race came into India about two thousand years B.C. They were civilized to a very considerable degree. They depended for subsistence chiefly but by no means solely, on their herds and flocks. The hymns speak of powerful kings and their great wealth. Commerce and many of the arts of civilized life were well known. They had even made some progress in astronomy. Cities, or at least towns, must have been pretty numerous. They had probably come into India in several successive bands. They were confined for a time to 'the country of the seven rivers,' as they called it¹ or, as we now name it, the Panjâb (five rivers). They did not find the land unoccupied. They had been preceded by the great Dravidian race—which was of Turanian, not Aryan, origin, and which is now nearly confined to India south of the Krishna river. Other races, now generally termed Kolarian which are likewise probably of Turanian extraction—may also have entered India about the same time as the Aryas. The Kolarian tribes were doubtless then, as they remain to this day, scarcely civilized, but certainly the Dravidian races were so to a very con-

¹ So called when the Indus and Sarasvati are included along with the five rivers of the Panjâb.

siderable degree. The intrusive Aryas met with opposition as they pushed on from the north west of India and although in the nature of things there must occasionally have been friendly intercourse between the two great races yet hostility evidently was the rule and at times it must have been intensely bitter. The language in which the Vedic poets speak of these enemies is uniformly that of unmingled vehement hatred. They are reviled as noseless speechless godless because forsooth their nasal organ was less prominent than that of their rivals their speech was not allied to Sanskrit and their deities were different from the gods and goddesses of the Aryas. That morally the one race at all surpassed the other does not appear. The earlier occupants of the soil gradually retreated before their gifted energetic enemies we may say they did so as the Britons slowly gave way before the Saxons and kindred tribes who came swarming over the German Ocean. What deeds of valour they may have performed and what sufferings they may have endured it is impossible to say, but at all events the invader was proud and pitiless and his desire was the extermination of all that opposed him. His prayers to the gods in regard to his enemies were the most tremendous of imprecations. Here is a specimen.

Indra and Soma up together against the cursing demon! May he burn and hiss like an oblation in the fire! Put your eternal hatred on the villain who hates the Brahman who eats [raw] flesh and whose look is abominable!

We may describe the religious belief which appears

in the Veda as nature-worship. It is a great mistake to call it monotheism¹. Max Muller justly says, 'If we must employ technical terms, the religion of the Veda is polytheism, not monotheism'. At best there are momentary glimpses of what seems almost monotheism². At the same time, as nature is throughout divine, there is an under-tone of pantheism, which, in one or two of the latest hymns, becomes distinctly audible. It is thus difficult to define or classify the Vedic faith. It abounds in contradictions³.

But we must glance for a moment at the faith that preceded the Vedic. As the striking resemblances among the Aryan languages allow no doubt to remain that they have all sprung from one source, so the religions of the various branches of the Aryan race appear to have had, at one time, a common faith. This is at least clear regarding the chief divinity acknowledged by the Greeks, the Romans, the Iranians (ancient Persians), and the Hindus. This divinity was understood to be wise, powerful, and good. He was not, in the strict sense of the word, a creator, but an organizer of the world. Though the supreme⁴, it does not follow that he

¹ It is matter of regret that a writer of weight like Mountstuart Elphinstone, in his *History of India*, should have so designated it. His learned editor, Professor Cowell, has, however, corrected the mistake.

² As in R V 1. 164.

³ As Dr John Muir states it, the faith has three leading characteristics — 1. Everything connected with religious rites is thought to have a spiritual as well as physical potency. 2. Every part of nature is held to be separately invested with divine power. 3. Yet all the parts are held to form one grand whole — *Sanskrit Texts*, v. 411.

⁴ *Ein aller, oberster Gott*. Roth.

was the sole divinity. Inferior beings also received worship. This system some call monotheistic—others polytheistic. We may call it imperfect monotheism. In every case the chief divinity was the god of heaven. This fact cuts up by the roots a vast growth of speculation respecting the origin of all religious faith as being Mr Herbert Spencer would say in ghost worship and it certainly gives no countenance to another frequently expressed hypothesis—that decided polytheism (as the word is usually understood) preceded explicit monotheism. It is easy to trace in the Aryan religions the continuous advance of polytheism and when the crowd of deities wearied the worshipper or philosophic thought began to call these beings in question it was to pantheism that recourse was had rather than to monotheism.

In ancient pre Vedic times—before the Aryan race arrived in India—a place of undisputed pre-eminence must have been held by the deity Varuna. This name is etymologically connected with *Ουρανός, hea en*. Its original signification was the encompasser¹ and it was especially the extreme vault of heaven to which the term was applied in Vedic times. But we may affirm that in the pre Vedic period it was not chiefly the visible heaven but the deity presiding over it that was the object of worship.

In the Vedas the word designating *God* is *deva* which etymologically means *brilliant, shining*. The deities then were *the bright ones*. Castren a high

¹ It is derived from *en* to encompass surround

authority especially on Turanian religion, maintain that throughout all Asia it has been pre-eminently to heaven that adoration has been paid. He say that, among all uncivilized people, heaven, considered as possessed of soul (*der beselte Himmel*) is the supreme divinity. But at the point to which we can trace back Aryan thought and life—that is, the time when the great Indo-European race was still undivided—we cannot call them uncivilized, and we can bring no evidence of their ancestors having been so. We believe that to worship heaven as living was a descent—a falling away from higher and truer conceptions of divinity.¹

In Vedic days Varuna—the god of heaven—does not retain his old, unapproached superiority. But very lofty attributes are still ascribed to him, and ethically he stands by far the highest among the divinities. It is he that upholds the order, both physical and moral, of the universe. He rewards the good and punishes the evil. A power approaching omnipotence, and a knowledge approaching

¹ It has sometimes been maintained that, during the Vedic period, there was a gradual elevation of the religious consciousness. On the contrary, we see a gradual degradation. From Varuna to Indra was a great descent, from Indra to the deities of the Atharva V was one still greater. Farther, it seems in a high degree improbable that the conception of heaven as a physical object was gradually exalted until the God of heaven had such high moral attributes ascribed to Him as belong to Varuna, and then that this great conception was lost. This theory assumes a gradual elevation of religion of which there is no evidence, and it denies a degradation of which the evidence is clear. Indra undoubtedly superseded Varuna, that is, low ideas built on physical phenomena came in place of high moral conceptions of divinity which are almost worthy of being ranked with those of the Old Testament.

omniscience are both ascribed to him. Although by no means implacable yet to the impenitent wicked he is severe and stern and it is a most instructive and by no means unintelligible circumstance that in certain hymns there begins to be manifested not only a dread but a dislike of a being so awfully pure and just.

An acute critic¹ has said that there are two great deities Varuna and Indra between whom the religious consciousness of the Vedic Aryans seems to oscillate. The conception of Indra was undoubtedly the later in origin it does not take us back to pre-Vedic times the idea—if perhaps not the name—seems of purely Indian origin. The return of the rains after the long drought of the cold and dry seasons was hailed in Northern India with unspeakable rejoicing it was like light dispelling darkness or life succeeding death. When the sky which had for eight months been painfully bright and stainless began to be veiled with clouds floating northward from the ocean and when the higher summits were wrapped in mists every man felt his heart expand with hope for relief from the intolerable blaze of light the stifling heat and the suffocating dust was now at hand. When the clouds were light and floated overhead without dropping down their watery treasure it was held that some demon was carrying captive the cows of the sky to confine them in the caves of the mountains. The sight was most tantalizing for the people stood in the midst of burnt up plains and dry watercourses and often of dying

Be gaugne

cattle But when the lightning flashed, and the thunderbolt pierced the dark enswathing vapour, it was regarded as the work of a friendly deity warring against the demon (Vritra), and compelling him to set the precious liquid free, so as to let it fall, to the refreshment and joy of all the inhabitants of earth That friendly deity was Indra He thus corresponds pretty nearly to the Jupiter Pluvius of the Romans Indra soon came to be described as a mighty warrior, standing victoriously to battle He never forsakes his friends. If they supply him abundantly with offerings, he asks no questions about their character, he will to the uttermost support his supporters those who give him his favourite nourishment Indra has no high attributes Next to his joy in battle, his main characteristic is his delight in the intoxicating Soma juice He rushes 'impetuous as a bull' to the place where it is flowing, and he quaffs it 'like a thirsty stag'

When it came to be said that 'the haughty Indra takes precedence of all gods,' and Varuna was becoming overshadowed by such a rival, there was certainly a deplorable declension in the religious belief of the Aryas Sensuous and sensual conceptions now took the place of moral ones But the explanation is not far to seek St Paul supplies it 'They did not like to retain God in their knowledge' They were overawed by the serene majesty of Varuna, they were terrified by his awful purity Indra, on the contrary, was both a mighty god and a boon companion, and when they liberally shared with him the beverage which they liked so well them-

selves he was completely won over to their side. Deterioration has thus marked Hinduism even from the most ancient times.

In the days when Varuna the king was supreme he was probably as we have said not the sole divinity. Even in Vedic days every force in nature every great phenomenon almost every striking object came to be worshipped.

A third divinity of a remarkable character was Agni the Fire (*ignis*). Physically he was very wonderful. Produced from the friction of two pieces of wood he devoured his parents. His powers were extraordinary yet though a mighty being he condescended to reside in their dwellings he repelled the darkness and the enemies—wild beasts evil men and fiends—that lurked within it. When fed abundantly with butter he rose heavenward in his brightness and bore the prayers and offerings to the gods. He was approached with reverential homage both morning and evening. But he was not confined to the piece of wood from which they had laboriously extracted him he could leap out suddenly from the hard stone when struck or from the dark cloud. He pervaded all things he was therefore one of the very highest of the gods. His hymns are more numerous than those of any other deity except Indra.

The early Hindu explained the phenomena of nature by his own human experience. We knew a little child in India who on seeing a bright star hanging by the side of the moon exclaimed 'Oh! look at the mother moon with her baby.' We do not know whether the child repeated what some

native servant had said, or expressed its own simple thought, but this well exhibits the childish interpretation of nature which prevailed in Vedic days. Even as the child, or savage, attributes life to surrounding objects, so did the ancient Hindus. Hence gods were multiplied more and more.

The Sun may be the first mentioned after the three great divinities noted above¹. He is preceded by the two Asvins and Ushas the Dawn. The return of light, as the first streaks of morning appeared in the east, was a very wonderful and beneficent event. Lustrous and lovely were the Asvins—the beams that heralded the dawn, and the Dawn herself—ever young, ever fresh, ever fair. Was a marvel that drew from the Hindu poets their strains of sweetest song. So, too, the Winds were gods, Vayu, and the Maits, or Storm-winds (literally ‘howlers’), were of high importance. The Earth was a goddess, The Waters were goddesses. The Moon scarcely received the notice we could have expected, and the Stars are seldom mentioned. Probably this was because night was greatly dreaded.

The reader may perhaps still ask whether it was the outward, visible object, or a being supposed to

¹ Yet the Sun does not occupy so high a place as we might have anticipated, or as he holds among the Santals and other Aborigines. Byron, in *Manfred*, speaks thus—

‘Glorious orb! the idol

Of early nature

Which gladdened, on their mountain tops, the hearts

Of the Chaldean shepherds, till they poured

Themselves in orisons’

But the holiest text in the Veda is a meditation on the sunlight. See Appendix 2

preside over it that received the homage. In the Avesta the sacred book of ancient Persia there is a distinction made between these two things and the homage is unquestionably paid both to the outward object and to a spirit or genius presiding over it. But the Hindus have never made so clear a distinction between these things as the Iranians did. The Indian mind in modern days oscillates between the two ideas—mixes them—often confounds them. In Vedic times it was more the visible tangible object than any presiding spirit to which the homage was paid—the object being personalized.

The deities in the Veda are generally spoken of as being 'three eleven' in number. But we also hear of three thousand three hundred and thirty nine divinities and even more. This is a vague amplification to denote that the powers surrounding men were exceedingly numerous. We shall see that in later days even this amplification was greatly amplified. The philosopher Hegel has justly affixed the epithet measureless (*masslos*) to the Hindu imagination; it revels in vastness vagueness mystery—soon losing all sense of fitness or proportion or harmony.

In the Vedic pantheon there is no system no fixed order. In his turn every one of the greater deities becomes supreme. The family relationships among them are utterly confused. It would not be difficult to show that any god was at once his own grandson and his own grandfather. We need not wonder at this chaos for the connexion between natural phenomena may be looked at from different points of view.

Almost each of the deities has a female counterpart, or, as she is called, a wife. But the goddesses are indistinct both in character and function, with the notable exception of one already referred to--the Dawn. The Earth, called the broad one' (Prithivi), has been also mentioned but her importance never greatly decreased as time went on. Aditi (the boundless expanse') occupied a somewhat higher place, as being the mother of gods and heroes.

The conception of triads is pretty frequent in Hinduism. In later Vedic days--the fourth century B. C. it was stated by a leading commentator (Yaska) that the divine energies were summed up in the three gods--Fire, Air and the Sun (Agni, Vayu, and Surya). But this is the generalization of a philosopher, and too much stress should not be laid upon it. It was in later days that the notion of a triad of gods became common.

Reference has been already made to the circumstance that the Iranian and Hindu religions were originally connected. After several branches of the great Indo-European family had successfully migrated to the West, the ancestors of the Iranians and the Hindus evidently still remained together, or at least were closely allied. Hence the connexion between both their religions and their languages. The Ahura, or Ahura Mazda, of the Avesta was originally the same as the Varuna Asura (the Lord Varuna) of the Veda. Mithra, who in the Avesta was originally the deity of the shining heaven, and who latterly became identified with the Sun, corresponds to Mitra (the Friend), who in the Veda is almost always coupled

with Varuna Mitra became more and more associated with the light of day while Varuna tended to be so with the awe inspiring heavens as revealed at night¹ Vayu the wind is the same both in the Avesta and the Veda Agni greatly resembles Atar the genius presiding over fire

A still more striking connexion exists between the Soma of the Hindus and the Homa of the Iranians (The words are the same with the usual dialectic change of *s* into *h*) Soma is the expressed and fermented juice of a milky plant growing on mountains (*Asclepias acida* or *Sarcostemma viminalis*) which when fermented is intoxicating When Paracelsus discovered alcohol his laudations of it were abundantly hyperbolic and perhaps we need not feel surprise that the simple minded Aiyas were astonished and delighted when they first experienced the exhilarating effects of Soma Still as they seem to have drunk it to excess the debasing results must have been well known and it is one of the most saddening things connected with the Veda that the glory of the Soma should be celebrated with such unbounded rapture Bacchynalian poets have been effusive enough at all times in their praise of wine but generally one sees a twinkle in the eye which shows that the bard is more than half in jest It would be a relief if we could persuade ourselves that the Vedic singers are only playing with us when they make Soma the king

In the Avesta there is also a strong bond between Mithra and Ahura Mazda These may Mithra and Ahura the strong gods come to our help

Vayu seems to have been originally almost as important a god as Indra but his greatness gradually decreased

of gods and men, the creator of heaven and earth, and the sovereign ruler of all beings. Most strange that the juice which they had crushed out from the milk-weed—which they drank themselves, and gave then gods to drink, and which never quite lost its physical character should at the same time be deemed a god and one of the very mightiest of gods¹. How could sane men drink in this way? We must leave the problem unsolved. In the religions of the world many things are morally worse than this, but nothing is more absolutely absurd. We may note that, though the praise of Homa in the Avesta is extravagant enough, it never rises to the same height of folly as the laudation of Soma did in India.

The importance naturally attached to the sacrificial fire and to the libation led to the exaltation of Agni and Soma. Similarly, the prayer or invocation was invested with mighty potency, and Brahmanaspati, or Brihaspati, the lord of prayer, became an important deity. He may almost be called prayer personified.

It is remarkable that the word *deva* (god), which is applied to the highest beings in the Veda, is used in the Avesta to designate demons². Several of the Vedic deities, in fact, are in the Avesta degraded into fiends,—even the mighty Indra himself

¹ Dr. Haug was one of the few Europeans who have tasted the Soma as legitimately prepared. He says, 'It is a very nasty drink, and has some intoxicating effect.'

² The Soma offering seems still to be made by a few Brahmans, but is completely shorn of its ancient splendour.

³ Still more decidedly the Avesta personifies prayer, and certain potent prayers are prayed to.

⁴ In Zend, *daeva*, which in modern Persian becomes *dev*.

seems to be so. It has been conjectured that there must have been collision conflict between the two races—the Iranian and Indian—which had been originally one and that a violent reconstruction of the ancient faith took place probably through the teaching of the famous Zarathushtra (Zoroaster). This is possible but by no means certain. In Iran the supreme divinity Ahura was never dethroned as Varuna was. Monotheistic ideas were gradually strengthened the distinction of god and devil was more strongly emphasized and those beings who were rivals not servants of Ahura were necessarily regarded as evil¹. Thus in an ethical point of view the Avesta stands always higher than the Veda.

The worship prescribed and exemplified in the Veda was not idolatry in the sense of image worship. Yet although the recognized ritual was free from this taint it is difficult to believe that images were quite unknown. The description of certain divinities is so precise and full that it looks as if it had been drawn from visible representations of them.

An important part of Hinduism consisted in the worship of the *Pitris* or Fathers (*paties*). This class of beings is not to be confounded with the gods (*devas*). Yama the first mortal was the offspring of the sun. He travelled the road by which none ever returns and is in the Veda the ruler of the happy dead. He drinks the Soma draught in

¹ The *vo l de a* came thus to mean *lemon*. This reminds us that in classic Greek *εμν* denoted a superhuman being whether good or bad. Augustine mentions that by his time through the spread of Christian ideas it had come to be used only in a bad sense.

the innermost part of heaven,' surrounded by other Fathers¹

As every thing connected with religious rites had a spiritual power (see note 3, p. 20) it was entitled to worship. Thus, the *Yupas*, or sacrificial pillars, are invoked to give wealth and progeny (R V in 1 5). But in fact every thing capable of helping or hurting was to be adored, as, for example, the war-horse the cow, the dog, and other animals, whether useful or noxious, the war-chariot, the sword, the plough, &c. also mountains, rivers, trees, and plants.²

The preceding remarks have had reference to the oldest of the sacred books, the Rig Veda. The next in importance is the Atharva Veda, which contains nearly 760 hymns. Many of these are repetitions of parts of the Rig Veda. What is original is, for the most part, greatly inferior in a moral point of view to what is contained in the older Veda. The deities are often entirely different. The Rig Veda acknowledges few evil

¹ In the Avesta he is Yimo the Ruler (Yimo Kshetrā, in whom the idea of a fall from original blessedness, which is discernible in the Vedic Yama, becomes unmistakable. From Yimo Kshetrā was derived the story of King Jamshid, so famous in later Persian mythology. Distinct references to a future life occur only in the two latest books of the Rig Veda. The life in heaven is generally described, in books posterior to the Veda, as sensual or even immoral. It is not immoral in the Veda.

² Let it be noted that the favourite divinities of modern days do not occur in the Veda—such as Śiva, Rama, Krishna, Durga, Kali. Considering the great stress laid in modern days on the divinity of the cow, it is important to remember that, according to the Rig V, the cow was killed and eaten, especially when guests were entertained. In fact, one designation of a guest was *go ghna*, cow killer. Strange are the revolutions of history. No deity is now so universally recognized as the cow, ceremonial purity is attained, or regained, chiefly through contact with her, or eating her five products (*panchagavya*). If a Hindu on his deathbed can grasp the tail of a cow, he dies happy.

divinities sorceries incantations and obscene practices are seldom inculcated in its hymns. But in many cases the Atharva Veda manifests a great dread of malignant beings—of fiends in fact and their wrath is earnestly deprecated. Talismans are invoked as possessed of boundless power and charms for the destruction of enemies abound. Altogether with the exception of a few hymns which appear to be the relics of a former period the Atharva Veda is a wretchedly low collection and the question at once forces itself upon us. How is this marked inferiority to the more ancient books to be explained? Two explanations suggest themselves. The Aryas mingled with the original occupants of the soil and both their blood and their religion became contaminated. Or again there may have existed from the beginning a higher and a lower form of religion—the latter probably the religion of the great mass of the people and the Atharvans presents the latter. In truth we hold both of these suppositions to be correct. Two causes apparently combined to produce the painful result. At all events it is in the highest degree improbable that at any time in India there existed only one form of religious thought among the Aryas. Systems which have flourished luxuriantly in later days had their roots we believe even in the earliest period and the deprecation of demons may probably have co-existed (we do not say in the case of the same individual) with the adoration of King Varuna the god of heaven.

CHAPTER II

THE VEDIC RITUAL

THE second part of a Veda is called the Brahamana. Professedly the Brahamanas explain the modes of performing the various parts of worship; but in reality they do much more than this. They are discursive treatises that deal not only with ritual, but questions exegetical and dogmatical, along with which they contain many explanatory legends. In an intellectual point of view they are decidedly inferior to the Hymns. Pedantry and puerility mark every page, literary merit they have none. Their sole value is from the light they throw on the development of the sacrificial system and religious thought generally.

The most ancient part of these treatises may date from about the sixth century B C, or at most two centuries earlier. A long period had elapsed since the composition of the earlier Hymns, during which religion had become more and more petrified. Thought and feeling had faded away in proportion as ritual was enlarged¹.

¹ One is reminded of Coleridge's words 'An appropriate ceremony in religion is like a golden chain round the neck of faith, but you must not draw the chain too close, lest you strangle the faith.'

The religious observances had been developed to a considerable extent even before the composition of the earliest Brahmanas. The rites says Haug 'must have existed from times immemorial. He contends that they preceded the Hymns. We must ascribe the commencement of sacrifice to pre Vedic times and it seems to be in reference to their origin in former ages that the Rig Veda itself calls the rites of sacrifice the first religious rites¹. That a complex ritual and elaborate explanations of its significance should have been so early in existence, is a matter full of significance.

We cannot discover that there were any temples—buildings set apart for worship—in Vedic times. There were no holy places—none permanently consecrated. Worship was performed generally in the house. A room seems to have been set apart for the sacred fire. When a grander ceremonial was required a space was enclosed for the occasion which might be either covered or open.

Worship was personal or social in the sense of domestic,—very seldom what we understand by public worship. Further each man dealt with the gods on his own account. When it was domestic the husband and the wife could worship together and if there were more wives than one the chief wife was the one associated in the act. The presence of any others whether worshipping or not, was an interruption to the service.

The worship consisted of offerings, prayer and praise. The chief offerings were clarified butter poured

on the fire, and the expressed and fermented juice of the Soma offered in ladles. The Soma was generally mixed with water or milk. Cuddled milk, rice, and cakes were also presented. The offerings were usually thrown into the fire, which, as it blazed high, was understood to bear them, or their essences, up to heaven. Sometimes the gods and 'fathers' were invited to come and seat themselves on the sacred grass with which the floor was strewn, that thus they might partake of the precious beverage. The remainder of the Soma was generally drunk by the worshipper, or, in somewhat later days, by the officiating priest or priests. Hymns of praise and prayer accompanied the offerings. Various metres were employed. Each metre had some special potency, one secured long life, another cattle, and so on.

It was distinctly understood that the offerings nourished and gratified the deities as corporeal beings. 'They who present to thee oblations, augment thy vast strength and thy manly vigour¹'. As in the case of men, so in that of the gods, exhilaration was produced by drinking the fermented Soma juice, and, as we have seen, Indra in particular indulged in it to excess, his love of liquor was 'intense'. Bloody sacrifices were also offered. The animals were chiefly sheep, goats, bulls, cows, and buffaloes. But the great offering was that of the *Asvamedha* the sacrifice of the horse, the ceremonies connected with which are detailed with disgusting minuteness in the Rîg Veda itself (R. V. 1. 162-163)². This rite, which had

¹ R. V. 1. 54

² From the Yajur Veda we learn that, along with the horse, 609

apparently descended from pre Vedic times continued for many centuries to be regarded as the greatest of all sacrifices and in later days when not one but a hundred horses were offered the potency of the ceremony was irresistible it made—if the worshipper desired it—the throne of the mightiest deities to totter This idea however is foreign to the Yeda

The sacrifice of human beings if not frequent was yet in existence Though practised it scarcely seems to have been approved and among the higher classes it gradually ceased It is referred to as the way of the Sudras the tribes that had been conquered and enslaved It doubtless continued long among the middle and lower classes and in truth it has not ceased up to this day Whether it was a practice handed down from pre Vedic times or adopted from the aborigines does not very clearly appear

We cannot state with certainty the ideas at first connected with the very remarkable rite of sacrifice nor can we fix the order in which they arose The conception of the gods requiring nourishment has been mentioned as very prevalent the food of man was necessary also to deities Again the offerings—including animal sacrifice—were eucharistic The important idea of sacrifice being expiatory existed in Vedic times and we see no reason to believe that it was not pre Vedic Farther the belief prevailed that the offering was a substitute for the offerer We also hear of a divine being—Prajapati or Vishnu—being the victim or again the being offered is the

anim 1 of various kinds wild and tame were tied to 13 *ustas* or sacrificial posts and offered.

primeval male, Purusha who is also identified with the Creator. Very remarkable indeed are such conceptions as these, and we do not seem sufficiently to account for them by ascribing their origin to a tendency in the Hindu mind to push every idea to excess, we may rather regard at least some of them as the relics of primeval revelation—fragments of patriarchal faith borne down on the stream of time. We do not assert that this is proved, but, assuredly, it cannot be disproved. We may well study, then, with reverent curiosity, the teaching of the ancient books regarding ‘the nave of the world-wheel,’ that which was believed to uphold the order of the universe—the great, mysterious, awful rite of sacrifice.

We see *tapas* or austerities, which will assume a most prominent place in later Hinduism, just beginning to appear.

The Hymns celebrate the power, exploits, generosity, and sometimes the personal beauty, of the deity addressed. In exchange for praises and offerings presented, he is asked and expected to bestow his favour and help. Temporal blessings are implored such as life, food, wealth, children, cows, horses, protection against danger, success in battle, the destruction of enemies, and so on. The praises bestowed on the god were believed to increase his power¹. The favour which he granted hardly depended on the moral state of the worshipper. The confessions of sin are very defective, so much so that Professor Weber asserts the religious sense of sin to be wanting

¹ ‘May our praises augment thy power’ (R V 1 10)

altogether¹ We think however this language is too unqualified We require to distinguish between the Vedic writers Some do appear to have a sense of defilement that is not merely ceremonial we might call it a smothered sense of personal sin Other Hymns do really little more than reiterate in endless forms the prayer Here is butter give us cows³

In the Brahmanas—poor as they are intellectually—there seems rather more reference to the ethical qualities of the gods than we find in the Hymns But there was no real advance for Varuna with his sovereignty and high moral attributes was more and more eclipsed

It is sad to see how rapidly prayer degenerated into a kind of spell or charm It became a magical formula the sounds of which were irresistible even when not understood only they must be fully and exactly pronounced Woe to the wretch who blundered! When prayer and sacrifice were offered in due form the gods would certainly grant the worshipper his request We see the idea that they *will grant* passing into the idea that they *must grant* and there gradually grows up the tremendous conception of extorting by sacrifice or austerities a desired boon from reluctant gods But if this dreadful con

¹ Weber *History of Indian Literature* p. 38 So Goldstücker Ethical considerations are foreign to these outbursts Similarly De Quincey says that the Greeks and Romans had not the faintest vestige of an idea of what in Scripture is called sin (*Works* v. 240)

² As was to be expected it is especially in hymns to Varuna that any right idea of sin is perceptible

So Barth We may enlarge the expression to this Here is butter give us cows and we will bring more butter

ception appears at all in the Vedas, we see it only in the germ

The Hymns were produced in the north-west of India, chiefly in the Panjâb. When most of the Brahmanas were composed, the Aryas had advanced eastward, perhaps as far as the country between the Ganges and the Yamuna (Jumna). The language of the Hymns has by this time become unintelligible to the mass of the people, and obscure even to the learned. Now, therefore, the sacred texts become stereotyped. The official 'man of prayer' the Brahman has become absolutely necessary. He probably cannot compose hymns, or offer extemporaneous prayers, but he can repeat them ready-made, and in fixed, proper formulae. The worshippers are now passive, the Brahman prays and sacrifices for them. He alone possesses the requisite knowledge of the sacred texts, and of the perilous precision with which they must be uttered he alone is capable. Thus the men of prayer became an order, and steadily grew into a caste. Only persons of their own class could enter into this, and, as we have heard it expressed in India, a horse is not more separate from a donkey than a Brahman is believed to be from a man of lower caste. This exclusiveness inhuman though it often was, was for the purpose of guarding the purity of their blood. Mixture with the non-Aryan inhabitants of India has taken place to a very large extent in other cases, it is among the Brahmans, if anywhere, that we are to seek for the descendants of the primitive Aryan settlers. This comparative purity of blood secured a measure of

intellectual superiority—the Aryans being undoubtedly a more gifted race than any of the earlier inhabitants of India. Of that intellectual superiority the Brahmans were from the beginning fully conscious and they systematically employed it for their own exaltation. With remarkable ability, with inflexible determination and with unrelenting selfishness they went on throughout many centuries encroaching on the rights both of princes and people. The usurpations and demands of priestly power have been striking enough in other places but the pretensions of popes and priests in Europe fade into insignificance when compared with those of the sacerdotal caste in India.

Education was necessary for the Brahman when he had become the depository of the sacred texts—which were probably still unwritten and handed down by oral tradition. In the schools there was little importance attached to what can be called doctrine; the externals of religion had by this time become nearly all in all. This we can understand but our Western minds can with difficulty conceive how the next step was taken. The gods were thrown into the shade and the rites became the great divinities. The principle of association has worked with great force at all times in India and soon everything used in worship became holy, became itself divine and an object of worship. Thus the texts with their mysterious potency about which the mind of the priests was so greatly exercised absorbed the attention almost to the exclusion of the beings they were addressed to. If the incantation was rightly uttered all was right.

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Meanwhile the ritual gradually waxed more and more elaborate and complex. The great celebration of the Soma sacrifice came to be exceedingly expensive, it required a host of priests, and lasted sometimes—in theory at least—for hundreds of years¹. High worship was thus an aristocratic thing, possible only for men of wealth. Animal victims were frequently offered in immense numbers, a mere hecatomb was but a paltry sacrifice. All the greater sacrifices required one or more human victims².

¹ Haug refers to the Mahabharata, III 105 13, as proving that the sacrificial rite might extend to a thousand years.

² 'The Brahmanical cultus remained inhuman for a long time' (Barth)

CHAPTER III

SECTION I

THE UPANISHADS — RISE OF PHILOSOPHY

WE have seen how a stupendous system of ritual observances gradually arose until thought and feeling in religion were overruled and all but smothered, by externals and the rites became almost independent of the deities in whose service they had been established. A reaction from this state of things we may say was unavoidable. The ritual could be performed only by Brahmins but it is very improbable that every Brahmin could find sufficient employment as a priest. Hence among such an intellectual class speculative thought was certain to arise and probably even in the discharge of their priestly functions some were led to ask: What is the meaning of all this? Worship had become to many a round of mechanical ceremonies but it could hardly be so to all. Then the Brahmins

¹ The meaning of the term Upanishad is not certain. Sankara Acharya explained it as meaning the setting to rest (or destruction) of ignorance. Others would render it sessions *quasi* lectures. Others again say it means that which sits beneath *quasi* mystery.

had not secured an absolute monopoly of thinking power, princes and nobles though debaired from priestly functions—could not be kept from reflection on spiritual things. The early period of the Aryan residence in India had been a stirring one, war with the aborigines must have been very frequent, and speculation, in such circumstances, could hardly have flourished. But the Aryan superiority in North-Western India was ere long secured, and the men of action could then begin to reflect. As the race steadily pressed down the great Gangetic valley into warmer and more fertile regions, the requirements of outward life were easily met, and there was time for rest and contemplation. We believe there is, in the higher Aryan mind, a tendency to dreaminess and quietism, and now not only outward circumstances, but the climate itself, disposed it to yield to this feeling. There are even in the Hymns—though probably not in the very earliest attempts to penetrate into the mysteries of creation and the world. Wonder is often expressed. Bold conjectures are hazarded as to the origin and meaning of things.

India, at the distant date we speak of, was largely covered with forests, and probably there were groves in sight of every village. In northern countries a residence 'under the green-wood tree' can hardly be called attractive, save perhaps in the height of summer, the return of 'winter and rough weather' will dispel the temporary charm. But in India there is almost at every season something exceedingly attractive about forest-life. The dense shade of the trees mitigates the intolerable heat and glare of day.

Then comes the quiet of the evening and the great hush of nature sinks into the inmost soul

There as the wild bee murmurs on the vlg
 What peace I dreams the handmaid spirits bring!
 What viewless forms the Aeolian organ play
 And sleep the furrowed line of anxious thought away!

Thus men who were disposed to religious thought were almost driven to seek a forest sanctuary. By and for these recluses were composed the Aranyakas or forest treatises and the most important parts—or supplements rather—of these are contained in the Upanishads of which we have said above that although properly only treatises appended to the Vedas they have come to be regarded as their most precious part. The Upanishads are found in various parts of the sacred writings. Some are among the Hymns, others among the Brahmanas, others among the Aranyakas and others stand by themselves. These last are appended chiefly to the Atharva Veda.

The text of the Upanishads is often uncertain sometimes evidently corrupt.

The Aranyakas are not clearly discriminated from the Brahmanas questions of ritual and other extraneous things are discussed in them. The Upanishads proper generally avoid such topics and discuss the nature of the Divine existence and its relation to the human soul.

The Upanishads are generally written in prose. They are numerous we have lists of nearly 40 of them. Ten or twelve are of special value¹. Very

Viz the Isa I ena Chhandogya I tha Prasna Mu ndaka Man dukya Brihad Aranyaka Aitareya and Taittiriya. Weber says (n 1878)—At present I count 235 Upanishads.

few of them date from Vedic days, possibly only six and certainly not twelve, can do so. These we may venture to assign to the fifth or sixth century B C, though the form in which they exist is probably some centuries later. Many of the Upanishads are quite modern productions.

Even in Vedic days—as we have seen the process of reflection had begun. This is proved by some of the later Hymns. In a few of these there are touching confessions of ignorance, such as this ‘Who truly knows, or who has told, what path leads to the gods?’ In eschatology—the doctrine of the last things—the Veda is singularly wanting, but the poets turn with the deepest interest to the origin of the world. They seem to have thought that, being in existence, it might continue so, but how did it come into existence? Beneath and around them was the wondrous earth, over them the still more wondrous sky: how came they there, and which of them was first? They could only fall back on human analogies. ‘What was the forest, what the tree, out of which they cut the sky and earth, that abide while days and many dawns have passed and gone?’¹ Or again, ‘Brahmanaspati has forged the gods as a blacksmith kindles his flame.’ Or again, India had begotten the sun, the sky, the dawn. Or yet again, all things were made out of Purusha, who was the primeval male, and yet a mighty deity. But Hindu speculation always inclines to the mysterious, and illustrations like these now mentioned were soon too simple for it. Ere long the idea arose that, amidst

the unceasing flux of things there was a something which never changed. From this it was easy to proceed to the thought that all else was only appearance and that this something alone was real. Though these conceptions were soon conveyed with all the lavish luxuriance of Oriental hyperbole we do not know that in the commencement they differed essentially from the idea expressed or implied, in the often quoted lines of Wordsworth

A sense sublime
Of something far more deeply interfuse !—

A motion and a spirit that impels
All thinking thing all objects of all thought
And rolls through all things

The language of Shelley may still better express the developed Indian conception

The One remains the Many change and pass
Heaven light for ever shines earth's shadows fly
Life like a dome of many coloured glass
Stains the white radiance of eternity
Until death shatter it in fragments

Thus then reflection, speculation had begun even before the Hymns had been all composed. The farther development of thought is presented in the Upanishads. These are by no means either systematic or homogeneous. They have been called guesses at truth for they present no formal solution of great problems. They contradict one another the same writer sometimes contradicts himself. They are often exceedingly obscure and to most Western minds repellent—vague mystical, incomprehensible. A few rise to sublimity others are nonsensical—

'wild and whirling words,' and nothing more. Yet there is frequently earnestness—a groping after something felt to be needful, there is the yearning of hearts dissatisfied and empty. In this lies the value of the Upanishads, our sympathies are called forth towards those hermits who saw no meaning in the stupendous ritualism that had grown up around them, or in the ever-increasing mob of deities that were crowding in. Another characteristic is the general sadness of their tone. With them commences that great wail of sorrow which, for countless ages, has in India been rising up to heaven. All the earlier Vedic hymns take a cheerful view of life, but with the Upanishads we see the beginning of that despondency which, as time goes on, will deepen almost into despair. Whence comes, it may be asked, this characteristic gloom? It has sometimes been traced to the unhappiness of the environment. Warfare was almost the normal state of Indian society—war with the aborigines, war of one Aryan tribe with another, a long struggle between princes and priests, and the steady exaltation of the latter, the Macedonian invasion, the rise and rapid progress of Buddhism, war with Scythian hordes,—in all this there was undoubtedly enough to distract and depress the Indian mind. In modern Europe the evils that still afflict both the individual and society have prompted the question 'Is life worth living?' and many, perhaps an increasing number, answer in the negative. If this be the case after all that Christ has taught and Christianity has achieved, we cannot wonder that those ancient hermits were overwhelmed

by the deep mysteries of existence and the manifold trials of life

The teaching of the Upanishads amidst some varieties¹ is in the main pantheistic

It is exceedingly difficult to state the chronological order in which the various systems of Indian philosophy arose But there is reason to believe that the sequence was as follows

First a belief in the sole self-existing being all else being the effect of ignorance or illusion

Secondly the belief in an original void out of which all things came

Thirdly the belief in an original plurality of selves, and of the independent existence of the world

We should only warn our readers if we went into this question at any length Moreover we must touch on this subject when we discuss the formulated systems of philosophy of which the Upanishads were only the precursors

We must however note that the Upanishads are by no means purely speculative They have a practical end in view they profess to teach the way of salvation They point out how the human soul ignorant of itself attaches itself to unworthy objects, and so is again and again dragged into the whirlpool of life

New ideas had by this time come in Of these none was more remarkable none more powerful in its influence than the doctrine of metempsychosis,

While doctrine closely akin to pantheism is most frequent in the Upanishads dualism is also found Even asceticism finds a place

¹ See Gough on the *Philosophy of the Upanishads* p. xi

or transmigration. The Vedic poets never spoke of a second birth, the good went at death to the happy abode of Yama, and as *pitris* (fathers) became quasi-divinities themselves, while there are some hints in the Rig Veda, and more distinct allusions in the Atharvāna, to punishment in gloomy pits as the doom of the wicked. We cannot say with certainty whether the idea of Transmigration sprang up in the Hindu mind, or was derived from the aborigines, we incline to the former supposition. The belief is not unnatural. Plato's doctrine of pre-existence involves it, and Pythagoras distinctly upheld it. But in India the belief has assumed a wild, fantastic shape, and it sways the minds of men with tremendous power. The series of births is virtually endless. The common statement is that it rises to eighty-four lacs—that is, eight millions four hundred thousand, and this in all who cannot somehow succeed in arresting the dreadful succession. According to the merit or demerit of a human being, he is born afresh into the body of a man, or a beast, or a bird, or a fish, or a plant, or a stone. 'Ah! this fearful round of births' exclaims the Maratha poet Tukaram—'this weary coming and going, when will it all end?' From ancient days all things on earth seemed to the Hindu to be in a perpetual flux, there was no stability, no rest, no abiding peace. Now, to the Hindu perhaps from climatic reasons primarily, the idea of repose is essentially that of bliss, and unrest is misery. And then the horror of tenantry the bodies of wild beasts and loathsome, venomous reptiles, such as snakes, toads, and worms! But when the soul once knows

itself it is in union with the true Self, or God. The sage then still lives only until the stock of merit he had amassed has been exhausted. Very startling are the declarations regarding the condition of the man who has reached this point. This perfected sage is long as he lives may do good and evil as he chooses and yet incur no blame. Such is the efficacy of a knowledge of the Self¹. But there is a further step to be taken. When the stock of merit is exhausted he is not like the multitude driven back to another birth when his body falls away, he is identified with the one and only Self. This Self is existence, knowledge and bliss. But the existence is an impersonal unconscious existence. With the knowledge there is no power or thing known, with the bliss there is no blessed one and no sense or cause of blessedness. We presume there is not one mind in a thousand that will profess ability to extract any meaning out of such words. But passing from such dreams we ask our readers to note the moral characteristics of all this. All dual distinctions are completely overturned². We are expressly told that the perfect sage when he murders does not murder, all appearance is an illusion, a dream from which at last he wakes.

One cannot but look with profound sadness on those hermits in the forests dreaming life and generations of life away in such unhappy dreams and sometimes

¹ So Anandam. See (overl.) 11. 61 (122). See also 1. 17.

In the d of *existence* it would be more precise to say *that it is* *it exists* or *it is itself this*.

² La doctrine de l'identité absolue par la nécessité de son principe divise le mal, —Caro *Leid d. Dieu* (1861) 1. 221.

torturing their bodies in the hope of thus identifying themselves—or rather, recognizing their identity with the One and All. The chief end of man believed to be the crushing out of all feeling and all thought.¹

• No wonder that a writer, who has devoted much time to the careful study of the Upanishads, declares them to be 'the work of a rude age, a deteriorated race, and a barbarous, unprogressive community'.¹ It is true that Schopenhauer professed to admire them attracted, no doubt, by their unrelenting pessimism, but we do not see how any one can share in that admiration who does not absolutely despair of the future of humanity. The Christian, at all events, can have no sympathy with such a feeling, for he believes in a Being who is possessed of every glorious attribute, and who is emphatically called 'the God of hope'. Therefore His true worshippers are men of hope, and if the present be in darkness, or at least in twilight, they turn their eyes to the promised age, and lo! the landscape is all bathed in floods of blessed sunshine.

Another remarkable conception, unknown in earlier days, that came forward in this period, was that of asceticism, passing into a morbid ecstasy. Quite possibly this too was derived from the lower races around them for among such races religion has easily run into wild excitement, both physical and mental. The worship of the god Siva comes into prominence during this period. He is the great lord of devotees who indulge in self-torture and extreme austerity. There is reason to connect him with the Himalaya

¹ Gough, p. 268

mountain—as if he had been the god of those inland tribes there dwelling, but the vessel may have existed from the first time—the Aryans either brought a part of the orthodox system.

STERN § II

THE SIX DARŚANAS—METHODICAL PHILOSOPHY

The Upanishads then contain the first attempt to comprehend the mysteries of existence—but their teaching cannot be gathered up into an harmonious system. As time went on a desire was felt to expand, clarify and arrange the earlier utterances—to make them more definite and more certain. Hence gradually arose what we may call the official philosophy of India which is comprised in a number of methodical treatises. These are generally called the *Sūtras* or exhibitions. No doubt it was only by degrees that they attained their present elaborated shape which cannot be much older than the Christian era. They consist of the following works:—1. The *Nyāya* which was founded by Gautama or Akṣapada; 2. The *Vaiśeṣika* by Kaṇāda or Kaṇadideva; 3. The *Sāṃkhya* by Īśvara; 4. The *Yoga* by Patañjali; 5. The *Mīmāṃsā*, by Jaimini; 6. The *Veśika* by Bhāṣyaṇa.

The original textbooks of the various system consist of *Sūtras*. The word properly signifies a string, and we may understand it to denote a string of rules or rather aphorisms. They are expressed with extreme conciseness—doubtless for the purpose

of being committed to memory, and without a commentary they are exceedingly obscure

With the purely philosophical part of these writings we need not much concern ourselves. Their metaphysical theories and their statement of logical processes possess no small interest, and in any history of philosophy they claim attentive study, but we must occupy ourselves mainly with their conceptions on religion

They belong to the division of Hindu books called *Smṛiti*. They are therefore authoritative, but not to the same extent as the Vedas and Upanishads¹

It is usual to classify these systems in pairs, making three pairs in the order given above, but this arrangement is not satisfactory. The Nyāya and Vaiśeṣika may indeed go well enough together, and the Sāṅkhya and Yoga may with some difficulty do the same, but the Mīmāṃsā and Vedānta have very little in common. Their conjunction has arisen from the circumstance that the Mīmāṃsā (otherwise called the Purva or earlier Mīmāṃsā) deals with the ritual portion of the Vedas as explained in the Brāhmaṇas, while the Vedānta or Uttara (later) Mīmāṃsā seeks to unfold and apply the principles of the Upanishads and thus, as each expounds a portion of what had come to be styled the Veda, the two systems were bracketed together

¹ The only case in which we ever knew them not to be recognized as authoritative scripture was that of Rājā Nārāyaṇa Bhaṣa (Bose) a man of position and influence in the 'Original Brahmo Samaj'. But no orthodox Hindu questions their full authority. We appealed at the time to the Pundits of Poona and Benares, who at once denounced the view now objected to

None of the six systems openly attack or deny the authority of the Vedas on the contrary they all profess the profoundest reverence for the sacred books. It is difficult to see how the authors of some of the systems could do this with any sincerity unless they held that what is theologically true may be philosophically false. Yet the Hindu mind has long surpassed all other minds in the ability to hold or believe itself to hold at the same time two or more opinions which appear wholly irreconcilable. Indeed an acknowledged note of the Hindu mind is eclecticism issuing in confusion. It has been said to be 'the very method of Hindu thought'. But the contradictions among the philosophical systems were too glaring to escape the notice of men capable of reflection and accordingly the author of one Darśana and his followers frequently attack the supporters of the others. Thus the great controversialist Śaṅkara denounces a follower of the Nyāya philosophy as a bullock *minus* the horns and tail—implying we suppose that he had all a bullock's stupidity without his power of fighting. The author of the Sāṅkhya charges the followers of the Vedānta with babbling like children or madmen. The Mīmāṃsā accuses the Vedānta of being disguised Buddhism. The Pāṇini Pūrana maintains that four of the six systems are simply atheism.

But while thus radically opposed to each other the six official systems of philosophy are all held to be orthodox. In this respect Indian philosophy is unlike the Greek which was developed in entire independence of religion. The relation of Indian

philosophy to the Veda resembles that of the scholastic systems of the Middle Ages to the Church

1 The Nyaya system deserves the praise of attending to *method*—i. e. the mode of discovering truth. It is distinguished by over-elaboration, dryness, formality, but its philosophy is by no means despicable. Beginning with the inquiry, Which is the way to attain perfect happiness? it asserts that this is found in right apprehension, true knowledge. The Nyaya undertakes to communicate that knowledge, so that the soul may attain the goal of perfect rest. Among other kinds of evidence it brings forward a form of syllogism which, though differing somewhat from the Aristotelian (built on the celebrated dictum *de omni et nullo*), is yet virtually the same, and which, for rhetorical purposes, is perhaps a more useful form. Still, the nicety of distinctions in which the Nyaya rejoices, exposes it to the reproach of encouraging wranglings and logomachies, which (rightly or wrongly) has so often been preferred against the logic of the Stagnite. In matters of physical science, when it has occasion to touch them, the Nyaya—as was of course inevitable—is often sadly astray.

Whether the more ancient form of the Nyaya was theistic, is somewhat doubtful, but in its later form it is so¹, and it ascribes to the deity intelligence, will, and power². But it says nothing of moral attributes

¹ Thus the *Kusumanjali* (a celebrated work of this school) exhibits an earnest attempt to prove the Divine existence. Of the Divine attributes it says next to nothing. Professor Cowell ascribes this work to the twelfth century A. D.

² The name of *Isvara* (or Lord) occurs once in the *Sutras* of Gautama,

is belonging to God nor does it recognize His government of the world. Nor can it be said to believe in creation inasmuch as it holds matter to be composed of eternal atoms. Confluent atoms in themselves uncreated composed the world¹. To call the Nyaya philosophy theistic is therefore misleading unless the character of its theism be explained. The Nyaya has nothing to say about worshipping God while yet it recognizes—implicitly at least—the doctrines and forms of worship inculcated in the Veda.

Soul or rather spirit is represented as multitudinous and (like atoms) eternal. It is distinct from mind.

2 The Vaiseshika system which we have said is rightly coupled with the Nyaya is an extension of the latter. The Vaiseshika Sūtras do not mention God. They go very fully into the doctrine of atoms—which like the Nyaya they declare to be uncaused and eternal. These atoms are so exceedingly small that it requires a combination of at least three of them to be perceptible.

Another tenet common to the Nyaya and Vaiseshika is that souls (spirits) are ubiquitous or universally diffused through space. But the spirit is united to *mind* which is atomic and not ubiquitous and the perceptions of the spirit are made through the mind.

the founder of the Nyaya. Later writers speak of the Supreme Spirit as moulding the universe not (in our sense) creating it.

It is interesting to see in the teaching of the Nyaya and Vaiseshika as in that of the Greek philosopher Democritus something like an anticipation of the atomic theory of Dalton.

A short specimen of the excessive refinement of the Hindu schools may probably suffice for our readers. Thus as right apprehension secures emancipation from pain the question is by what means right

3 We come now to the Sankhya system. It holds that there are 'two primary, eternal agencies, viz. Nature (Prakriti, or *that which produces*--*natura naturans*) and Souls. The system is thus essentially dualistic. There is no place for God, and accordingly it is known among the Hindus by the name of *Nriswara Sankhya*, or *the Sankhya without the Lord*. But all that the original text asserts is that His existence is 'not proved.' Kapila, then, was an agnostic rather than an atheist.

There are three elementary principles (of which, in later days, we hear continually), namely, Sattva, Rajas, Tamas, or Truth, Passion, Darkness. These principles enter into all things, and on the relative quantity of each in any object depends the quality of the object.

The root of all things except soul is Prakriti, which may be tolerably rendered by the word 'Nature.' It is not a product. It is the producer of seven things.

Apprehension can be obtained. Four means of doing so are mentioned, viz. perception, inference, comparison, and testimony. Each of these is explained at great length by the commentators. Then an exceedingly important matter is the *categories*. There are seven of these, viz. Substance, Quality, Action, Generality, Particularity, Intimate Relation, and Negation. The categories are thus subdivided. *Substances* are nine in number, viz. earth, water, light, air, ether, time, space, soul, and mind. *Qualities* are twenty-four in number (we spare our readers the enumeration). *Actions* are five in number, viz. elevation, depression, contraction, expansion, motion. *Generality* is of two kinds, viz. extensive and non extensive. And so on. These, and similar distinctions, belong to the Nyaya and Vaisheshika schools. Hindu metaphysicians not only split hairs, but, as Abraham Tucker would have said, quarter them. Thus the Sankhya tells us that there are eight kinds of error, eight kinds of illusion, ten kinds of extreme illusion, eighteen kinds of gloom, and eighteen kinds of utter darkness.

which are themselves producers of sixteen other things. Soul is not a product nor a producer. Souls (I urnah) are countless in number, individual, sensitive, eternal, unchangeable. All that is done by Prakriti is done on behalf of soul. In its own nature soul is without qualities until united with Prakriti. The union of the two is compared to a lame man mounted on a blind man's shoulders. Each of the united two is then (as it were) capable of perception and movement. But how and when this important union is effected is not clearly mentioned.

The Sankhya very firmly holds that out of nothing nothing comes (*ex nihilo nihil fit*)¹. The universe is produced by the union of nature and soul, each individual soul producing its own universe. With the Sankhya as with the systems already mentioned present existence is suffering, and the great object of the philosopher is to obtain exemption or rather emancipation. This is found only through knowledge. When through knowledge the soul is emancipated from the 'setters' which bind it in its union with nature, all suffering ceases.²

Although Kapila was a man of acute and patient thought it cannot be said that his system stands intellectually high. Morally, it is still lower. Contemplation is the one right occupation of the sage.

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De nihilo nihil in nihilum nil posse reverti — Parm.

¹ Compare this with the Wesleyan story.

Let us ask the question of the enlightened soul? So through study of philosophy the soul can be liberated from the cycle of birth and death. But neither I am a materialist nor a spiritualist (Sankhya) Karika 14.

no matter about conduct. Prayer is needless, or rather absurd. Man is 'thus not a religious being.

4 Along with the Sankhya is generally coupled the Yoga philosophy, which is often styled the Theistic Sankhya. It agrees in its general principles with the Sankhya proper, with the one remarkable exception of acknowledging the existence of God.

The great end of the Yoga is to obtain union with the Supreme Being¹. But the mode of attaining this great end is very startling. It is by concentration of the mind, by calling in all wandering thoughts and fixing attention on some one object. Any object will answer, if we think of it alone, other thoughts must be suppressed. When the contemplation is carried to its full extent, it is simply contemplation without any object of contemplation.

The French philosopher Degerando and many others have spoken of the necessity of acquiring a mastery over the mind, a power of recalling it from its wanderings and forcing it to dwell steadily on some proper object. So far their idea resembles that of the Yoga, but immense differences soon appear. In the Yoga the adoption of certain bodily postures, restraining the senses, suppressing the breath, and so forth—even fixing the eyes steadily on the tip of the nose—are potent means towards the end desired.

¹ 'Iswara, the supreme ruler, is a soul distinct from other souls, unaffected by the ills with which they are beset, unconcerned with good or bad deeds and their consequences, and with fancies or passing thoughts. In him is omniscience. He is infinite, unlimited by time.' So Patanjali, as quoted by Colebrooke. The language is, in several points, marvellously like the celebrated description of Deity in the *Dei et mundi natura*, 'Omnis enim per se divom naturi necessest,' etc.

Paṭanjali does not speak—as the Hindu poets often do—of the soothing influence of Nature in her shady groves and quiet murmuring streams. With him the place or environment seems of no importance and in this omission he lost a potent influence which is fitted to steady the human mind, recalling it from foolish dreams. Wildness extravagance downright absurdity became the characteristics of his system. The effects ascribed to extreme asceticism are truly marvellous. The past and the future are unveiled to the gaze of the Yogi (the man fully initiated in the Yoga). He sees things invisible to others. He hears the sounds that are in distant worlds. He becomes stronger than the elephant bolder than the lion swifter than the wind. He mounts at pleasure into the air or dives into the depths of the earth and the ocean. He requires mastery over all things whether animate or inanimate. Mysticism and magic thus very strongly mark the Yoga system.

And with what object was the system studied? Frequently perhaps generally for the acquisition of supernatural power and for no moral end whatever.

The question may well arise whether all the practices of asceticism issued only in dreams and sheer delusion. Or did the Yogi sometimes come in contact with powers and principles in nature of which our accepted science as yet takes no note? We will not venture to say. Our readers will answer the question variously according as they may deem the teachings of clairvoyance, animal magnetism spiritualism &c. to have in them any element of truth or not. De

ception, both conscious and unconscious, there has often been in abundance, has there been nothing more? For the Hindu Yogi, at all events, we venture to urge the plea that he was often not a wilful deceiver, he told what, in his state of mental exaltation and ecstasy, he believed he had seen and done. Still, we heartily assent to the judgement which an accomplished Sanskrit scholar has passed on the doctrines of the Yoga 'Conscientiously observed, they can issue only in madness and idiocy'¹

5 The fifth system is the Mimamsa. It need not occupy us long. It is not a philosophical system, it is a system of Vedic interpretation, thrown into a quasi-scientific form. To Jaimini the Veda was all in all. It was its own evidence. Its very sounds existed from all eternity. The sum of human duty was to obey its precepts.

We pass to the system which has long been the chief philosophy of India, viz

6 The Vedānta. This word properly means 'the end, or scope, of the Vedas'. The name, however, is misleading. The doctrines inculcated by the Vedānta are entirely distinct from those of the Veda proper, they agree with those of the Upanishads, which (as has been explained) are philosophical disquisitions *appended* to the Veda. The name, however, has had the effect of enhancing the estimation of the philosophy to which it has been—whether ignorantly or artfully—attached.

The Vedānta philosophy is said to have had its origin with the sage Vyasa. This personage we may

¹ But

dispose of as mythical. The most distinguished champion of the system was the sage Śaṅkara Acharya who probably flourished after the year 700 A.D. His influence in the exaltation of Hinduism and the depression of opposing systems (such as Buddhism and Jainism) was immensely great and equally so in the diffusion of the Vedānta philosophy. We may indeed say that his influence on the theology of India has been as great as that of Augustine on the theology of the Western Church.

A clear and brief statement of this philosophy in its developed form is found in the Vedānta Sūtra and of this authority we shall now largely avail ourselves.¹

The Vedānta Sūtra distinctly states that the Vedānta philosophy is founded on the Upanishads and works auxiliary thereto. It does not mention the Vedas proper in this connexion. It had been declared in the Chhāndogya Upanishad that there was in the beginning only one [thing] without a second. So the Vedānta Sūtra begins by saying: The oneness

¹ The following publications will supply all needed information regarding this important system — 1. A Lecture on the Vedānta embracing the text of the Vedānta Sūtra. By Dr. L. Blantyne 1871.

2. *Manual of Hindu Theology* (containing a version of the Vedānta Sūtra with copious annotations). By Colonel G. A. Jacob 3rd edition 1891. 3. *The Vedānta Sūtra* with its commentaries. All in Sanskrit by Colonel G. A. Jacob 1894. 4. Three Lectures on the Vedānta philosophy. By Professor Max Müller 1894. 5. In the *Journal* of Sept. 1, 1894 there is a review by Colonel Jacob of Max Müller's lectures and excerpts taken to seal of the paper so to speak. (Colonel Jacob we may remark has long been a diligent student of Hind. philosophy.)

Ekamevadvitīyam = ekam eva dvitīyam

of soul and God. This is shown by all Vedānta treatises'. It quotes approvingly the ancient text, 'The whole universe is God'. God (who is generally called Brahman¹) is existent, intelligence, and bliss². He is the sole Reality. All else is only appearance, it seems, but is not. Its seeming existence is owing to ignorance or illusion. Ignorance is not a mere negation, it is possessed of two powers—that of envelopment (or concealing) and that of projection. The former hides from the soul its identity with God. The latter 'projects' the appearance of an external world³. Brahman and Ignorance are co-eternal principles.

There are four conditions of the soul waking, dreaming, dreamless sleep, and a 'fourth' state, which is something higher (or deeper) than even dreamless sleep. The waking man is grossly ignorant of reality, he is occupied with unreal mockeries, and believes in their existence. The sleeper⁴ is freed from a portion of such ignorance, although he dreams, and believes in his dreams. He that sleeps without dreaming is more fully emancipated from delusion. But the consummation is the 'fourth' state, which it would appear can hardly be described in human language. Thus, then, according to this philosophy, although the world seen in dreams is a delusion, the

¹ There is a great distinction between Brahman (or Brahman) and Brahman. To avoid confusion, we shall write the former thus—Brahman.

² Sat, chit, anand, or (as written together) *Satchidananda*. This formula is continually repeated in Vedānta treatises. *Sat* means *existent—an existent thing*, the word being neuter.

³ 'The projective power can produce anything, even the whole external world' (V S sec 39).

world seen in our waking hours is a grosser delusion still

The great necessity then is knowledge—apprehension of truth. 'He who knows what soul is gets beyond grief. Nay more, he who knows God becomes God.'

Meditation without distinction of subject and object is the highest form of thought according to the Vedānta. But the consummation is when thought exists without an object: it must not be an object to itself.

In the older books a practical or conventional existence is admitted of the human soul—the Self within us—is distinguishable from the Supreme Self, and the same thing is admitted of the external world.¹ But when the philosophy has been fully formulated by the great Śaṅkara Acharya, it generally asserts the doctrine of *non-duality*. The soul is one with God although it may not know it, and the external world is a mere appearance, an illusion.

It would be vain to expect logical consistency in the statement of such transcendental thoughts. We have quoted a text about the soul *becoming* God. But if it is God already (although ignorant of its being so) how can it *become* God? The contradiction was evidently noticed and it is met with this solution: 'Being God it becomes God'—language which has to us no meaning. It cannot mean that the soul

¹ Professor Gough (loc. cit. p. 11) *Philosophy of the Upanishads* argues that the doctrine of Maya or illusion is a vital element of the primitive cosmological conception as exhibited in the Upanishads.

Īśamevadvitīyam

being God recognizes itself as God, for, when the soul is emancipated, it enters into unconsciousness

We cannot be surprised if, in explaining this system, writers run into contradictory statements. They sometimes speak of transmigration and of absorption. There can, however, to the true Vedantist be neither of these things. There has never been, there will never be, transmigration. The Self within us has been is, and will be, God. *Aham Brahma*, 'I am God,' is a fundamental text of this philosophy. Absorption, too, is unnecessary and impossible. But even the subtlest and most logical Vedantist—not excepting Sankara Acharya himself—cannot formulate his theory in clear, or even consistent, terms¹

It is a theory which, I presume, no Western mind can acquiesce in. We hear, indeed, of pantheism, and even of a Christian pantheism, as still professed in Europe, and poets especially will use language which, logically, may involve a pantheistic view of nature, but the passionate utterance of poetry is to be distinguished from the calm dictum of philosophy. The identification of the individual with the universal soul is to all thinking men, in the words of Tennyson, 'a faith as vague as all unsweet', or, rather, the theory is unthinkable, and those who profess to hold it befool themselves with words and words only.

Passing from the intellectual weakness of the Vedanta to its ethical character, it is evident that moral distinctions are overturned by it. The sole

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¹ In the *Academy* of Sept. 1, 1871, there is a review by Dr. John Mun of a work by Dr. Bruening on Sankara. This writer clearly proves that Sankara is inconsistent.

existence being Brahman or Self sin is non-existent and impossible. It appears to exist but that appearance is as illusive as the mirage of the desert. He whose intellect is not confused even though he should kill kills not. In so far as this can be believed by the Hindu it must practically exert a very evil influence and accordingly there is clear and explicit testimony that the reception of the Vedānta theory produces a most pernicious effect on moral character¹.

All religion is also overthrown by the Vedānta. Humility a sense of dependence love to God reverence prayer obedience repentance for sin love to our neighbour—all such things must to a genuine Vedāntist appear absurd and in fact impossible.

And now glancing at the whole of these famous systems of philosophy we may sum up our opinion in the words of Dr John Muir. The only one of the six schools that seems to recognize the doctrine of Divine Providence is the Yoga. It thus seems that the consistent followers of these systems can have in their perfected state no religion no action and no moral character.

The authors of the six Darśanas endeavoured to systematize the principles of the Upanishads and to do so without visibly departing from Hindu orthodoxy. The result of their labour was a number of philosophical schools whose teachings were on many points irreconcilable with each other. Yet the Hindu professes to accept all the six schools as authoritative.

¹ That to a Vedāntist there is no distinction between virtue and vice can be abundantly proved by quotations even from Vedāntist treatises. See Colonel Jacob's *Manual of Hindu Theism* p. 126.

so that, if he really understands them, he believes in contradictory propositions. With regard to their theology, we have in the various schools distinct affirmations of polytheism, pantheism, and atheism, and, we may add with some hesitation, monotheism.

The points in which they agree are the following

1. All the systems, except the Mimamsa, inculcate expedients for attaining salvation, or the emancipation of the soul from the body and from desire.

2. Ignorance is the great cause of the bondage of the soul.

3. But also works, whether good or bad, bring the soul into bondage. For good works have merit, and merit necessitates enjoyment, and bad works have demerit, and this necessitates suffering. Where enjoyment or suffering is, there is no true emancipation. The emancipated soul feels neither pain nor pleasure.

4. Emancipation is obtainable only through right apprehension. The soul must apprehend itself as distinct from the body, the senses, &c.

5. The soul is eternal, without beginning and without end.

6. Before it attains emancipation, the soul is subject to transmigration.

7. The world had a material cause something out of which it was produced.

8. The world has always existed. It has often been reduced to its first elements and formed anew, but, in one state or other, it has existed from eternity.

We hasten to add that although Vedantist writers very often express themselves in contradictory terms, yet, as the Vedanta, in its developed form, denies the

existence of an external world some of the principles now stated do not rightly apply to it

The six Darsanas did not entirely supersede the Upanishads. They are dry and cold and technical whereas in the Upanishads, notwithstanding all their extravagance there is a human element which appeals to the heart and awakens sympathy. Still the recognized philosophy of the schools held a high place in India, and the contradictory utterances of the Darśanas occasioned no small perplexity. Accordingly a very earnest attempt was made to bring the discordant voices into harmony by the author of the Bhagavad Gītā (Song of the Holy One). We cannot fix with any certainty the date of this remarkable composition. It has sustained many interpolations. Some of these can hardly be earlier than the third century of the Christian era. By that time very considerable intercourse had taken place between India and the West. The Yavanas are spoken of in the epic poem the Mahābhārata with high admiration and under that designation seem to be included the Greeks and the Greco-Bactrians¹. It is exceedingly probable that there was some interchange of thought between East and West especially after Alexandria had become a meeting point between Asia and Europe. The Manichæans certainly borrowed from both Indian and Christian thought and so probably did the Gnostics. It has also been asserted (though perhaps not fully proved) that the later Platonists show signs of acquaintance with Indian philosophy especially with

Omni cient are the Greeks O I Ing—heroic men surj assingly

the Sankhya, Yoga, and Vedanta systems¹. We admit that India had 'little intellectual wealth for exportation to the Alexandrian emporium²' but, beyond all question, its asceticism and monasticism excited, chiefly through Egypt, a powerful influence over the West. Was not the debt fully repaid? Various circumstances concur in showing that India borrowed from the West more than she lent. In regard to mathematical and physical science this assertion admits of no dispute, in many cases the very terminology found in Indian books is simply Greek, and one astronomical work is known by the name of *Romaka Siddhanta*, i. e. Roman (or Grecian) treatise. In recent days Indian thinkers have been marked by exclusiveness and intellectual pride but such was not always the case. In regard to religious ideas, India was from the beginning marvellously receptive, even the debased aboriginal faiths and rites of the land were largely absorbed and partly assimilated. Hinduism has grown to be the enormous and abnormal thing it is, both by accretion from without and by development from within.

These considerations will help us to form a tolerably correct conception of the intellectual position of the author of the *Bhagavad Gita*. He probably was a Brahman, and possessed of all the culture of his caste. He certainly was a man of as high intellectual endowments as any Indian sage with whom we are acquainted, at once a poet and a philosopher. Such a man would look around him, and be dismayed at

¹ Lassen, *Indische Alterthumskunde*, iii 379-412

² Gough, p. vii

the multiplicity of rites and the contradictions of beliefs among his people. Was it possible to bring a cosmos out of such a chaos? He would at all events make the attempt. And he has done so in verse at once melodious and majestic. He moves on with the stately march of a Lucretius yet at the same time scattering poetic flowers around him and, like Lucretius *contingens cuncta leporē*.

The Bhagavad Gita is inserted in the middle of the vast epic poem the Mahabharata¹. The interpolation was doubtless made to stamp it with authority. It consists of a dialogue between the warrior Arjuna and the deity Krishna. Arjuna was a distinguished leader in the great war between the Pandvas and the Kauravas. The armies were drawn up in battle array, the war shell had sounded, and the deadly strife was about to commence when the tender hearted Arjuna was overwhelmed with grief at the thought of imbruing his hands in the blood of men whose opponents were yet near relatives. His bow drops from his hand, he weeps, he cannot fight. The god Krishna, who has been acting as Arjuna's charioteer and giving him advice, interposes with a rebuke of this faint heartedness and denounces his reluctance to slay the foe as disgraceful, despicable weakness. And to prove his point the deity plunges into the depths of metaphysical speculation and at length reaches the conclusion— And therefore up on to battle son of Bharata! There is thus an exceedingly unnaturalness in the way in which the disquisition is introduced, but if it was to be palmed off as quasi authoritative

¹ In the Mahabharata from line 830

Scripture, there was probably no easier or more effectual way

Krishna, in this remarkable production, is represented as the Supreme Being himself. By the time it was composed Vishnu had attained a high place in the pantheon, he was one of the gods of the Hindu *Trimurti* (triad) and a large body of followers regarded him as the greatest deity. Now Krishna is a manifestation, or avatara, of Vishnu. Thus, the words which he speaks are accepted as an utterance of the deity condescending to instruct men in a bodily form. And this is one great cause of the immense popularity of the Bhagavad Gita, which is not only carefully studied in Sanskrit, but has been rendered into many of the vernacular Indian languages. The greatest poem in the Marathi language is an ample commentary on the Song of the Holy One, and the whole character of the succeeding literature has been powerfully affected by it. Several versions of it have appeared in Hindi. It is also popular in South India, and has been translated into Telugu and Canarese. The great Tamil poem of Tiruvallavar, the Kural¹, also borrows largely from the Song.

Let us briefly glance, then, at the teachings of this important book. Its great effort is to harmonize the doctrines of the Yoga, the Sankhya, and the Vedanta. It begins by dwelling on the exceeding value of controlling the mind, according to the first of these acquais, and so attaining to union with Deity: a man we is essential, the sage must be absorbed

¹ Lable poem was the work of a low caste man, a Paraiy a - Gour

in contemplation. While lauding the Yoga the Gita steers clear of the wild asceticism and magic that are the main characteristics of the system. The metaphysics of the Sankhya is regards Purush and Prakriti &c are adopted (We have explained these terms above). But the doctrine of a Supreme Spirit is presiding over them is added—an alteration of a fundamental character. There are said to be two kinds of Prakriti which also is in essential change. In describing the Supreme Spirit the poet seems to task his fertile imagination in heaping thought on thought and image on image until we confess even his practised touch fails to awaken admiration or sympathy. Finally Krishna reveals himself to Arjuna in his supreme form as possessed of countless faces—countless mouths—countless eyes—as in fact all things—and blazing like a thousand suns. This passage is a striking proof of the extravagance—the *Masslosigkeit* (to use again Hegel's phrase)—of the Hindu mind¹ which in fact can never discriminate between greatness and bigness and totally lacks the taste for natural simplicity. The practical conclusion of the whole is that every man should strenuously perform the duties of his caste and Arjuna being a Kshatriya or soldier has nothing to do with whimpering, for fighting killing is his

¹ Another expression of Hegel's is 'The dream state of the Hindu mind.' Barth a very thoughtful and well informed writer thus characterizes the Hindu people. 'They are at once sensual superstitious speculative with an equal appetite for subtle theosophy and credulities and have never been able to rest satisfied with faith in one god or reconcile themselves to the worship of many.'

function And so the warrior is convinced, and plunges into the battle.

The book is full of contradictions. Contemplative quietism is enjoined in one place, and in another energetic action. Farther, the attempt to harmonize the three systems of philosophy ends in total failure. Two of them must be stripped of their most distinctive features before even the semblance of unity can be secured. The 'Song' is mainly, though not wholly, Vedantist, that is, pantheistic, in its doctrine.

The incubus of caste has heavily weighed down the soul of India for ages, and it is at this day the chief obstacle to elevation and advancement. Yet the 'Song' accepts it, glories in it, and asserts that *varnasankhara*, or the mixture of classes, is the cause of the most pernicious consequences. 'A man must not forsake the occupation to which he is born, even although it be blameworthy.' A barber's son must be a barber, whatever may be his capacities and opportunities of raising himself. The son of a slave must be a slave. There is this compensation, however, the very meanest—yes, even women and slaves may attain salvation if they place their entire trust in Krishna.

The exaltation of Krishna is one of the most notable features of the book. His early life was in many things most faulty, most foul, yet the grave author of the 'Song' regards him as an incarnation of the Supreme Divinity. Clearly there had arisen, by the time the poem was composed, a feeling of the need of believing in a Supreme Being, who was not dim, distant, inconceivable, but who mingled in the

affairs of human life. How this feeling arose is a most interesting question but here we cannot try to discuss it though we must do so in another place. The Supreme Being whom we have seen acting as Krishna's charioteer is yet declared to be not properly existent. I am existent and non-existent and again The Supreme Deity is not to be declared either existent or non-existent. Metaphysicians like W. Humboldt have tried to affix a rational meaning to such language but we need not make the attempt. Finally the Gita in some places admits the existence of an external world and makes it a part of the essence of the Supreme. This is diametrically opposed to the teaching of the Vedānta nor is it reconcilable with what the Song itself inculcates in various passages.

One remarkable characteristic of the book has still to be noticed, Its language in many places bears a wonderful resemblance to that of the Bible. We are prepared to find in Hindu writings resemblances to thoughts and expressions in the Bible just as we find them in Greek and Roman authors it would be strange if such parallelisms did not occur. But the resemblances between the Gita and the Christian Scriptures particularly the New Testament are so numerous that the question unavoidably arises. Could the writer of the Gita have been acquainted with the teachings of the Gospel? This point has been fully discussed by Dr. Lorinser who has carried out a view very ably supported by Professor Weber and others to the effect that the development of the Krishna legend has been powerfully affected by ideas

borrowed from Christian sources. It is well known that various apocryphal Gospels were circulated in the East—chiefly among the Syrian Christians—from the second century downwards¹. Translations of these were made into Greek, Latin, Coptic, and Armenian. These writings are of special importance in the history of Mohammanism. The Arabic *Gospel of the Infancy*, which seems to have been a version from the Syriac, was ascribed to St. Peter, and had much currency in Arabia. It was the main source, in all probability, from which Mohammad drew his ideas of Christ and Christianity. We do not think it can reasonably be denied that these legends have powerfully affected Hindu mythology. It is true there is a great difference between this degraded Christianity and the lofty teaching of the Canonical writings which seems to be occasionally echoed in the Gita. Still, in Western and Southern India at least, there were Christians by the time of the probable composition of parts of the 'Song'. Moreover, it is rather difficult to account for the statements of the Mahabharata regarding 'the White Island'² and the worshippers of one God who were white men found there, unless by supposing that the Hindus knew a great deal about Christian countries in the West. A mind like that of our author—essentially eclectic, and laboriously gathering ideas from all quarters—would certainly have been deeply impressed by many of the Christian doctrines.

¹ See *Edinburgh Review*, July, 1868, and *Indian Antiquary*, September and October, 1873.

² Mahabharata, vii 337.

provided he had become acquainted with them. If he lived in Western or Southern India he could have had no difficulty in doing so nor would the difficulty in any part of India have been great. So that although we do not consider the theory of Dr. Linsner to be proved¹ we hold it probable that Christian ideas were to a considerable extent early incorporated with Indian thought.

But we must carefully distinguish between the Song and the Puranas or later writings. While it is only probable that Christian conceptions have been introduced into the former it is certain that legends regarding Christ have powerfully influenced the latter. But what a falling off! The tales in the apocryphal Gospels are eminently silly but as reproduced in the Puranas they are often revoltingly impure. Our limits will not allow us to dwell longer on the striking Song, — in which are laboriously interwoven so many conflicting theories — in which are occasional gleams of lofty thought but which on the whole is so hopelessly astray on fundamental points. Let us conclude by giving the judgement pronounced on it by M. Cousin one of the most tolerant of philosophers and like the author of the Gita essentially an eclectic thinker. Before this kind of theism at once terrible and chimerical and represented in *extravagant and gigantic symbols human nature* must have trembled and denied itself. Art in its powerless attempt to represent being in itself, necessarily rose without limit to colossal and ine

¹ Certainly it is not proved that there was a version of the Scriptures in an Indian dialect.

gular creations. God being all, and man nothing, a formidable theocracy pressed upon humanity, taking from it all liberty, all movement, all practical interest, and consequently all morality. Again, you will comprehend how man, despising himself, has not been able to take any thought for recalling the memory of his actions, so that there is no history of man and no chronology in India.¹

It would have been strange if the orthodox philosophies (which nominally acknowledged the Vedas as authoritative) had aroused no opposition. Opposition to the Vedas themselves, and to all systems connected with them, there evidently was from the first. The most famous sect of this class was that of the Charvakas—so called from a noted teacher. It inculcated

¹ Of Hindu philosophy in general, Archer Butler observes: 'The effects of such views of God and man may easily be conjectured. Upon the mild sages of the Ganges they probably produce little result beyond the occasional suggestion of elevated ideas, perhaps more than counterbalanced by the associations of a minute and profitless superstition. But, upon the enormous mass of the nation, these baseless dreams can only result in the perpetuation of ignorance and the encouragement of imposture' (*Lectures on Ancient Philosophy*, i. 266).

Burnouf, in his elaborate preface to his edition of the Bhagavata Purana, expresses his surprise that the Hindus should have devoted all their faculties to the examination of insoluble questions and the comprehension of the incomprehensible. Other nations, he says, soon abandoned such fruitless attempts, and directed their attention to inquiries of a practical character. But the mind of India, fed on tales of the gods, disregarded the doings of men. Thus India has never cared for the history of the past, nor thought it worth while to record the events of the present.

To fix dates in early Indian history is impossible now. Happily at least one date older than the Christian era is ascertained, it is that of Chandragupta, the Sandrocottus of the Greeks. He was the grandfather of the celebrated Asoka, 'the Constantine of Buddhism'. He flourished three centuries B.C. On the probable date of Buddha see *infra*.

undisguised materialism. It seems to have been marked by a light sneering infidelity and it was probably in derision that the school was said to have been founded by Brihस्पति the *guru* of the gods.

The authors of the Vedas were only buffoons, knaves and demons,—such was the sweeping dictum of the Charvākas. Their morality seems to have amounted nearly to this. Let us eat and drink for to-morrow we die. Closely allied to these sceptics must have been the Lokāyatikas or Secularists. It is enough to note the existence of such scoffing sects. More earnest doubters would doubtless avail themselves of the polemic of the Buddhists and Jīnas against Hinduism.

We have thus reviewed at some length the philosophical speculations of India and though we are saddened by the result of our inquiries we cannot be much surprised. With all its patience and acuteness the Indian mind never rose to the height of Aristotle or Plato and on problems which these great thinkers failed to solve what light could possibly be thrown by Vyasa or Bādarāyana? Of the highest speculations of Greek and Alexandrian philosophy St. Paul was compelled to say. Hath not God made foolish the wisdom of this world? I or after that in the wisdom of God the world by wisdom knew not God it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe. Even so is it in India.

The feeling of sadness which we confess to have experienced in the review of Hindu philosophy is so far modified by the hard dogmatism and the

unbounded self-assertion of all the schools. It would be an immense relief if one word betokening perplexity or distrust of their own wisdom were uttered by those teachers—such as we heard occasionally proceeding from the Vedic poets, but there is no such word. Each theorist assumes, instead of proving, his premises, and then moves on with head erect, possessed of absolute faith in his own omniscience. It never occurs to him either that there are matters with which the human mind has no faculties to deal, or that Truth unveils her treasures only to the humble.

CHAPTER IV

DEVELOPMENT OF BRAHMINISM SINCE THE C 15TH

IN order to take a combined view of the great schools of Indian philosophy we have been obliged to include the Gita although it is of considerably more recent date than the six exhibitions (*darsanas*). But, as we desire to trace as far as possible the progress of Indian thought chronologically, we now go back to the sixth century or so B C.

While philosophy went on developing sacerdotalism did so too. The cultivation of the former was not confined to Brahmins but all religious teaching and observances were more and more monopolized by the priestly caste and the functions which the Brahmins had once secured they tenaciously retained. It was a slow steady process of usurpation continued from age to age. There are clear indications of resistance on the part of other classes and in civil matters the Brahmins were compelled to concede ample powers to the military caste to which the rulers belonged. But their spiritual authority and claims were not for a moment relaxed. Spiritual power is of all powers the strongest and may be the most tyrannical and

so it became in India. The system of caste was fully established by the sixth century B. C.

Codes of law had by this time begun to appear, which were to regulate civil as well as religious life. As a kind of supplement to the treatises on ritual (Brahmanas), a class of writings called Sutras had appeared. One division of these, called Grihya Sutras, treated of domestic ceremonies, another, called Dharmas Sutras, referred to public right—civil and criminal law. Out of these Sutras the various treatises on jurisprudence seem to have gradually arisen.¹ The most celebrated of these books is the Code of Manu. Where, when, and by whom it was drawn up we cannot with certainty say. With some probability we may ascribe its present form to the fifth, or at latest the third, century B. C., but it may have been only very gradually moulded into shape. Brahmanical thought pervades it all through, and nowhere does the measureless pride of the Brahman appear in more repulsive forms. It would seem as if the very gods had been created for his special benefit.

According to Manu there are four castes or classes that are regular—the Brahman, the Kshatriya, the Vaisya, and the Sudra. The Brahman is the priest, the Kshatriya is the warrior, the Vaisya is the husbandman or trader, the Sudra is the servant, or rather slave. There is, besides these, a multitude of impure classes, which are said to have arisen from the intermarriage of members of one pure caste with those

¹ 'The so called revealed codes [Manu, &c.] are, in most cases, but improved versions of older prose works'—Bühler, *Sacred Books of the East*, II 10

of another. The first three classes are invested with a sacred thread as a token that they are twice born—though that name is often used to designate especially the Brahman. Unlike the Parsi religion which gives a sacred thread as the token of initiation to men and women alike Hinduism recognizes no twice born women. As for the Sudra he has simply nothing to do with the statutory religious rites. Any attempt on his part to engage in them demands summary punishment and Rama the warrior god when he beholds a Sudra practising rites forbidden to his caste simply decapitates him on the spot to the great delight of the gods¹. To teach a Sudra the Vedas was a grievous sin to receive money for doing so was an unpardonable crime.

The usual word in Sanskrit to express the idea of caste is *varna* which properly means colour. The Dasyus and other aboriginal tribes who opposed the intrusive Aryas are called the black skin² and apparently there was—wholly apart from the natural hostility between invaders and invaded—a strong repugnance on the part of the fairer race to the darker. Human nature is sorrowfully consistent we see in this an anticipation of the relations that subsist even in modern times between the white and black races. Up to this day there is generally a marked distinction in colour between the highest and the lower castes. The purity of the Brahman blood has in various places been pretty successfully preserved.

With fixed determination then the Brahmans maintained for generations the struggle for supremacy

¹ *Pamāyana* vi 4, 6

² *P V* 1 130 8

until at last the prize was won. We read of earnest opposition on the part of the Kshatriyas or warrior caste, with whom doubtless the two others, in so far as they may have been able to resist at all, must have taken part. The kingly power was a foe which it took all the skill and perseverance of the Brahmins to overcome. In individual cases, indeed, they had to give way. Thus the celebrated Visvamitra is said to have obtained the rank of Brahmanhood for himself and his family. The later legend (invented by Brahmins) represents this high distinction as having been won only by frightful austerities prolonged for thousands of years, as if it had found it necessary to deter others from making a similar attempt. Although this was not a solitary instance of successful resistance to Brahmanical domination¹, yet, on the whole, the priestly power continually increased. If we are to believe the Brahmins themselves, the Kshatriya race was finally exterminated by Parasurama (Rama with the axe), the fifth incarnation of the god Vishnu. It is exceedingly probable, that this legend implies a great contest between the priests and the soldiers, in which the former were completely victorious. The Brahmins seem thenceforth to have ruled all things according to their will—in other words, with a rod of iron. They now drew up the most stringent rules regarding caste. When castes multiplied, which they necessarily did as social life became more complex—each profession becoming a kind of caste—they were ready with ridiculous tales to explain their origin. Men of different castes

¹ King Janaka also is said to have opposed the Brahmins

could now not dine together. Marriages of people of different castes were detestable. Above all for a low caste man to marry a Brahman wife was the horror of horrors. Some writers of respectability have almost apologized for caste—they say it has a good as well as a bad side. So has slavery as well as many other things of the serpent's brood. They think it guarded morality as a man would be deterred from committing offences which the law did not punish provided expulsion from caste would be entailed by them. Yes in that case—but what offences were so punished? Eating drinking and marrying—if contrary to rule—but for ages past if not from the very beginning the most heinous sins could be committed without injury to a man's position in society. On the other hand if—even under the pressure of famine—he ate food prepared by a man of lower caste and even if the food had been forced into his mouth against his will he was summarily expelled and suffered all the frightful evils which excommunication involves in India. But as the modern development of caste will necessarily come under consideration at a later point we shall not now discuss its moral character at greater length.

The great object of the legislation was to secure the exaltation of the Brahman and the regulations are exceedingly detailed with a view to this. Every Brahman properly passes through four stages of life. First he is an unmarried student secondly he is a married householder thirdly he is a hermit and fourthly he is a religious devotee. He enters the first stage at the age of eight through investiture with

the sacred cord. He then resides with a preceptor (guru) to learn the Veda. When his studies are completed, he returns home and marries. Marriage is a sacrament, it is generally accompanied with great rejoicings, and lasts for several days. As a married householder, he is especially bound to perform five great duties, or forms of worship—that is, he repeats the Veda, worships his ancestors, worships the gods, worships all beings (chiefly by scattering grains of rice for living creatures to eat in the open air), and shows hospitality to guests. His wife must also have certain important qualifications. She must be of his own caste, not related to him within the sixth degree, she must not have the name of a constellation, or of a tree, or of a river, she must walk like a young elephant, and must not be afflicted with red hair.

When his strength begins to fail and he has a grandchild, he must betake himself to the forest, either accompanied by his wife, or alone—after entrusting her to her sons. He must now bathe daily thrice, he must allow his beard, nails, and hair to grow, he must continually be conversant with the Veda and meditate on the Supreme. Penances are obligatory. In the hot season let him sit exposed to five fires, in the rains let him stand uncovered, in the cold season let him wear moist garments. He must live without a house, and remain wholly silent.

One does not see how the hermit could long survive under such a discipline, but if he did, he must enter on the fourth and last stage. His beard, nails, and hair are now to be clipped. He is to be provided with a dish, a staff, and an earthen waterpot. He

must wander about continually, begging his food once a day. Coarse clothing, total solitude, no home, no fire to cook his food—these things are essential. Then like a tree falling into a river when the bank gives way, or like a bird pleased to quit the branch on which it has had its perch, so he cheerfully forsakes the body which is the abode of sorrow and disease. In this remarkable delineation there are a few pleasing touches—for example, the ascetic is exhorted to bear all things with equanimity and to avoid giving pain to any sentient creature. Yet the usual note of extravagance is seldom wanting, and the ineradicable taint of error is seen in the command to suppress all love as well as hatred, as a needful preparation for union with the Supreme. But this whole style of thought is so foreign to Western minds that we can hardly apprehend it—perhaps hardly do it justice. No wonder that the Greeks were confounded to see the multitudes of men who seemed weary of life in Northern India. A happy, sensuous existence was all in all to the Greek, and death was full of gloom. To the Brahman life was misery and the cessation of all personal existence was the supreme good. It is surely both touching and instructive to note how Greek and Indian strayed so far in opposite directions from the truth.

The legislation regarding women requires to be noticed, since the treatment of one half of the population is a point of the greatest possible importance. Women in earlier days had occupied a position of respect. We have poems in the *Veda* that were written by women, and in somewhat later times

women often entered into religious discussions with as much zeal and intelligence as men. But as time went on, a great change took place. In the developed code women are put in the same position—at least as to religious rights and property—with Sudras or slaves. 'Women's rights' were unknown. It is a seeming, but not a real, contradiction of this to say, as Miss Nightingale has somewhere said, that "women are absolute in their own sphere." The mother, the grandmother and the mother-in-law are real powers in the household. When the females in a Hindu family patriarchal in its constitution—combine against the wishes of the men, they generally carry their point. But alas for the widow and daughter-in-law!

Women could have no property of their own. 'Women were created to be mothers' says the legislator¹. They may be married before they are eight years old. A man may have more wives than one. A woman is under her father in childhood, then under her husband, when her husband dies she is under her sons. 'a woman is never fit for independence'. Even if the husband be wicked, or in love with another woman, he must be revered as a god by his wife. When he dies, the widow must 'emaciate her body by living on pure flowers, roots, and fruit', she must continue, if she live, 'performing harsh duties'. The marriage of a widow is forbidden. Taking this law in connexion with the permission—or command almost—that women be married when no more than children, one easily apprehends the deplorable consequences. Any one who has been in India, or who reflects on

¹ Manu, ix. 96

the results of such legislation must be wounded in his inmost soul as he thinks of the sufferings of Indian widows

We have still to speak of the inhuman rite of Sati (Suttee) or the burning of widows on the same funeral pile with their dead husbands. When the British Government in India was preparing to abolish it—which it did in 1829—the Brahmans vehemently opposed all interference with the time honoured custom and under their influence almost a rebellion in Bengal seemed imminent. The Brahmans contended that Suttee was a religious institution authoritatively prescribed in the Veda. They quoted the precise passage enjoining that widows should consign themselves to the fire. But when examined the passage in question was found to inculcate the very reverse of what the Brahmans affirmed. Professor H. H. Wilson proved that they had actually falsified the text and not merely mistranslated it: they had changed the words of the one book which they professed to receive with awful reverence as the eternal utterance of heaven. Rightly does Max Muller denounce this act as perhaps the most flagrant instance of what can be done by an unscrupulous priesthood¹. It has been calculated that from the year 1756 when the battle of Plassey gave Britain the sovereignty of Bengal up to 1829 when Suttee was prohibited in British territory no fewer than 70 000 widows had thus been sacrificed. And if this estimate be even approximately correct what pen dipped to the feather in human agony can describe the horrors of the Suttee

¹ *Cities* 1 35

rite for the last two thousand years? The tortured and murdered women must have been millions in number. Alas for

‘The fair humanities of old religion,’

of which poets vainly talk! All honour to the memory of Lord William Bentinck, who, in spite of the opposition of Brahmans leagued (*pi oh pidoi*!) with some Europeans, dared to quench those hellish fires! The writer must be pardoned if he appears to speak too strongly, but when he went to India the Suttee flames were still blazing in Native States, and he well remembers the thrill of horror and indignation which he felt when he read the account of the burning alive of nine women along with the corpse of old Runjit Singh. Four wives and five slave girls who were concubines were thus murdered. But nine was a small number, there are cases on record in which the holocaust consisted of sixty or seventy women, and even more.

The Sanskrit treatises on Hindu law are very numerous¹. Next to Manu the Code of Yajnavalkya is held in high esteem. The latter is much shorter and more systematic than the former, but in their general character the two codes pretty much agree. Yajnavalkya’s work may perhaps date from the first or second century A.D. Both of these codes are written in verse, and indeed that of Manu is sometimes truly poetical².

¹ ‘The total number of Dharma-Sastras, or treatises on law, is fifty-six,’—*Weber*

² Manu, x. 84. We must add that amidst much that is childish and not a little that is morally wrong in the great law-book, we occasionally

Our limits will not allow us to dwell on the general character of Hindu legislation but we may mention that trial by what is generally called ordeal is very much more prominent in the later code than in the earlier. The forms of ordeal are as severe and unreasonable as those employed in mediæval Europe. Here again the Brahman had the easier trial. He was to be judged by weighing. If innocent he rose upward; if guilty the scale in which he was descended. Ordeal by fire or water or the drinking of poison was reserved for the Sudra. Another point of difference between the codes is this: gambling is expressly prohibited by Manu but the later lawgiver allows it only insisting that a certain part of the gain shall be paid to the king and certain other persons. The Hindus had been greatly addicted to gambling even from the times of the Veda. It is probable that the earlier legislation honestly opposed it but found its suppression impossible and that the later was satisfied with the attempt to regulate the vice.

When the laws ascribed to Manu were drawn up the Hindus were in Northern India near the river Sarasvati. The people seem to have lived in villages rather than large towns or scattered habitations and we may well believe that some form of associate life was necessary to protect them against enemies and wild beasts. The country must have been much more richly wooded than it is now. The supply of water

come upon noble thoughts. Thus The wicked have said in their hearts: None sees us. But the gods see them all and do the spirit in their own breast. Such saying is like an oasis in the desert.

also must have been ample, for the Sarasvatī, which is extolled as a mighty river, now loses itself in the sands before reaching the Indus. Flocks and herds abounded. Agriculture had been originally held in high honour, but ere long 'the benevolent' objected to it, because the iron-mouthed pieces of wood wounded not only the earth but the creatures dwelling there¹, and hence Brahmans and Kshatriyas should have nothing to do with it. On every side of the village a space was left for pasture-ground, fields could be enclosed within it for cultivation, but then, as now, the greater part of the cultivated ground must have been at some distance from the village. Rice, barley, leeks, and sugar-cane were among the most important products. Artisans of various kinds were employed, each, as a rule, confining his labour to his own village. In fact, from the earliest days, and through successive centuries, the village system has been indestructible and, as a village institution, complete in itself. Dynasties may come and go, but the villager clings to his inheritance, and contentedly lives and works whither, and as, his fathers did before him. For women, when not engaged with household duties, the common occupations were spinning and weaving. We hear of travelling merchants, and there was doubtless much traffic between one part of the country and another. Foreign merchants could reach Northern India by the river Indus—though the ascent was doubtless difficult then, as it is now. Indian products seem to have been carried to Persia, Palestine, and Egypt from an early date, but we cannot

¹ Manu, x 84

suppose that either exports or imports were on an extensive scale. Ivory seems to have been exported from India and as the African elephant had not been domesticated war elephants must also have been so. Indigo (the very name denotes the country of its growth) and cotton were early in use in India and were also exported.

CHAPTER V

STRUGGLE BETWEEN BRAHMANISM AND BUDDHISM

IT has been already mentioned that ritualism and philosophy went on developing side by side. It is not conceivable that the zealous supporters of the one system aided in the development of the other. The students of philosophy, indeed, were careful to declare themselves to be orthodox believers in the Veda, but the inevitable result of their speculations was to weaken, among those who accepted their teaching, the authority of the established worship, and indirectly to undermine that of the Veda. Meantime, the ritual had assumed more and more imposing dimensions, and extravagant asceticism more and more prevailed. Sacrifice had become more protracted, more expensive, and more bloody. All religious services were conducted in Sanskrit, and the sacred texts of the Veda were in an archaic form of the language which the priests themselves very partially understood. Princes and people could only look on and see worship performed on their behalf. Direct approach to the deities was possible only to the holy Brahman, and it was his inalienable birthright—the

title ran in his blood. Religious instruction for the mass of the people was never thought of, nor did the philosophers ever dream of communicating to them their daring speculations. Altogether the religious condition of India had become darker than ever—deplorably dark—by the sixth century B. C. One is disposed to think that a reaction from priestly tyranny and extreme sacerdotalism was inevitable. It has been said of the Reformation of the sixteenth century that it was certain to have taken place even had the great soul of Luther never come upon the scene; the ever gathering waters must have burst their way ere long. Even so in India two thousand years before the Reformation in Europe. An immense revolt from such intolerable tyranny over the souls and bodies of men was sure to come. But the specific form which the revolt assumed was largely due to the personal qualities of the reformer. We are aware that writers of high name have doubted whether such a man as Buddha ever lived.¹ It seems to us however that unity is so deeply impressed on early Buddhism that we are compelled to ascribe it to one author. It is at all events far easier to believe that there was no Zoroaster or no Homer than that there was no Buddha.

It is now pretty well made out that the death of Buddha fell between 482 B. C. and 472 B. C. and this is the second certain date in Indian chronology. We cannot in this little work discuss either his character or his doctrines at any length. There is no evidence that he was a man of high intellectual gifts; his

¹ Such as Wassiljew, H. H. Wilson, Senart, and Kern.

chief characteristic was tenderness of heart. He saw overflowing sorrow all around, and with him the great question was—How shall that sorrow cease? In the portentous metaphysical speculations with which his system has been overlaid, he had no share, his aim was wholly practical. It has been asserted that he openly attacked Brahmanism, but this does not seem likely. As a mere social institution he appears to have had no quarrel even with caste, although a gentle soul like his must have mourned over its detestable tyranny, but he held that none who adopted his teachings need be fettered by it in their mutual intercourse. Men of all ranks were welcomed as disciples. Women too—although still debased from that position which is their right—received, on entering the society, a place of comparative respect. His law, he declared, was a law of kindness, and intended for all. He preached in the vernacular language, and to masses of men. The complex ritual of Brahmanism he ignored, and sacrifice, as involving pain to sentient creatures, was abhorrent to his whole system of thought. A prince sympathizing with the people was a sight by no means common, a prince instructing the people in their own tongue was a sight entirely new. We cannot, then, be surprised at the effect of his public appearances. He was the man for the time.

A distinguished philanthropist in modern days¹ used to say ‘Disease and misery and vice exist. I have no time and less inclination to talk metaphysics about them, but my life shall be given to remedy the

¹ Pastor Fliedner of Kaiserswerth

evil and lessen the load which is crushing down into mere animalism the beings made in God's image. The last clause Buddha could not have uttered, for Buddha did not believe in God or God's image but the rest of the sentiment he would heartily have adopted as his own. In respect of this tenderness of heart Buddha stands unique in the Pagan world. When we think that without believing in God and without having the example of Christ he was able to rise so high we are filled with astonishment. And with regard to his atheism it is a thing to be deplored but hardly to be wondered at. He believed in *gods*—beings superior to men but subject to mutation and decay and in the countless series of births which he had passed through he had been himself a god just as he had been a worm. In so far as Buddha attempted to philosophize he seems to have agreed with the earlier Sankhya school¹ which taught that

¹ Buddha however did not derive his pessimism from the Sankhya.

Gradually a stupendous system of metaphysical speculation was connected with Buddhism and before the Christian era this had been developed into a pure Nihilism especially under the teaching of Nagarjuna. This asserts the existence of an original void out of which proceeded all that is. But what is? Only a series of sensation. Using modern terms we may call the philosophy of Buddhism pure sensualism.

We have said that in the absence of historical documents the chronological sequence of the various philosophical systems cannot be fixed with certainty. Quite possibly the Buddhist doctrine of an original void became prominent when the Hindu metaphysical speculations of the Vedānta has been pushed to an extreme and the impersonal Brahman in fact had been reduced almost to zero. The Buddhist took only one step more than the Vedāntist.

The Sankhya as it appears in later books is probably a polemic against the Buddhist philosophy. It strongly asserts the real existence

the Indian mind that they could not be uprooted. Accordingly these were skilfully interwoven with the Brahmanical system while at the same time some of the deficiencies of Buddhism were carefully remedied.

At an early time there was no open conflict between him we may call Buddhism. Buddha we have said. This was a higher than caste though he taught his which according to the ancients constituting a spiritual action even of Zeus himself. Man or woman might

But apart from its atheism. Justice to this lofty greatly faulty. Salvation—all the same different manner—was to be obtained by people becoming monks and nuns—mendicants and ascetics. The idea of being in the world yet not of it was far above his reach. And he dealt with individuals. He could not save society he could only destroy it. His followers could attain salvation only by abandoning all family ties.

His counsels of perfection—unless his early followers exaggerated his views—ran into an asceticism which even those who admire his unqualified pessimism will repudiate as extravagant and senseless.

We find in Buddhism much that is high and pure much that is foolish and much that is deplorably defective. It disregarded caste but nothing was gained when the Buddhist *sangha* became the substitute. The Buddhist clergy were all ascetics and speedily became full of spiritual pride. Theirs was a very bad form of monasticism. The superiority of Buddhism to Hinduism as a moral system is unquestionable and yet it seems all but powerless to

produce the morality it inculcates. Its best feature was its early missionary spirit. It is a pathetic spectacle to witness those old Buddhist monks crossing inhospitable mountains and stormy oceans, that they might preach to barbarous races that poor gospel of theirs—the best, alas! they had to offer declaring that all existence is misery.

In India Buddhism contended with Brahmanism for fully a thousand years, and when Asoka (who deserves the appellation of Emperor of India as much as any ruler ever did) had embraced it and given it his powerful patronage, it seemed not unlikely to prevail finally over its rival. But it was not so to be. Various causes combined to overthrow it. For one thing, the Brahmans had all along maintained their intellectual superiority, which they showed both in speech and writing. The Buddhist style has been called 'the most detestable of all styles', and the thought was generally as feeble as the expression. Society also rebelled against a system which aimed at its dissolution by drawing into monasticism and mendicancy every man and woman who was in earnest about salvation. Then, Brahmanism was national, Buddhism was cosmopolitan and this difference, which at first helped Buddhism, the astute Brahmans would turn to full account when at last the Indian princes roused themselves to repel the Northern invaders. In the end Buddhism disappeared from Indian soil. It was, however, a dear-bought victory to its opponents. They retained their power by surrendering many of their distinctive principles. Many Buddhist ideas had so penetrated

the Indian mind that they could not be uprooted. Accordingly these were skilfully interwoven with the Brahmanical system while at the same time some of the deficiencies of Buddhism were carefully supplied.

For a long time there was no open conflict between Brahmanism and Buddhism. Buddha we have said did not inveigh against caste though he taught his followers to rise above it by constituting a spiritual community of which any man—or woman—might become a member. Let us do justice to this lofty conception of brotherhood so widely different from the narrow selfishness of Brahmanism. The Brahmins must undoubtedly have disliked the bold innovation but probably open war between the rival systems did not commence until the Buddhist fraternity began to share in the gifts of which the Brahmins had hitherto had a monopoly. Although the Buddhist was professedly a mendicant his order was often rich and to the Brahman this was altogether intolerable.

We do not know that there ever was a persecution of Buddhists on any large scale. Local outbreaks there must have been as there have often been between rival sectaries in India and in all such collisions the pacific Buddhists if true to their principles would fare the worse. But there was no sudden fall of Buddhism there was a long and gradual decay until it finally disappeared from India about the end of the twelfth century A D. But we may fairly say it was not so much expelled as it was absorbed.

CHAPTER VI

RECONSTRUCTION OF HINDUISM THE VAFARAS

THE Hinduism that gradually arose as Buddhism faded away was a vastly different system from that which previously existed. We find in it distinct traces of Buddhistic thought, we may say, that an undertone of Buddhism is audible through all later Sanskrit writings, and equally so in the vernacular literature. Sacrifice was set aside, and great regard for animal life was inculcated. This was a stupendous revolution, a reversal, one might say, of the deepest thought of the early Hindus. No more even of horse-sacrifice—that rite of dazzling splendour and tremendous potency. A sentiment, often heard in modern India, began to move the public mind ‘Non-killing is supreme religion’

Again, the main strength of Buddhism was Buddha, first, the living man, and after his death, his memory. Assuredly it was not its wild asceticism that gave Buddhism its influence, nor was it the stupendous and incomprehensible metaphysics that soon clustered around the system. It was the mild, loving man himself. His character compelled an admiration which passed in many cases into adoration. The influence

of Buddhism on Hinduism is traceable as clearly as anywhere in the *Avatara* or descents of divine beings to mingle in the affairs of human life. It is especially the god Vishnu who thus descends. Round the naturalistic divinities of the Veda there had gathered a mass of fable which served in some degree to humanize them. Still much of their original physical character remained and they had few or none of the attractive attributes of Buddha. The latter had by this time come to be regarded as a brother man whose heart was full of sympathy with the sorrowful and yet a kind of deity possessed of superhuman power. The Brahmins chose two great legendary heroes Rama and Krishna whose names were associated with events in history as famous in India as the War of Troy was in Greece. They represented them as divinities who had descended to earth. They were as truly human as Buddha and still more divine. Round the simple Buddha there had gradually clustered a wild mythology, the offspring of a deprived taste so that the touching history of the man was not easily traced amidst the false ornaments so lavishly thrown around it. The Brahmins yielded to this morbid appetite for extravagant fiction and as far as in them lay outdid the Buddhists in its gratification. There is some reason to believe that the tale of the warrior god Rama was of Buddhist origin and in general the descended god retains the Buddhist attribute of gentleness. But the metamorphosis of the Buddhist sage into the Hindu prince reveals the wonderful fertility of the poet's imagination. Later on the taste of the people became yet more corrupt,

and still the Brahmans ministered to its cravings, so that, in the god Krishna, all the finer elements of character have disappeared, and the poet strives to appease the cravings of an imagination utterly debauched. Buddhist legends were abundantly childish, but they never were impure. Impurity, however, is an almost unfailing mark of Hindu literature, and we venture to explain this, not by attributing it to utterly corrupt taste on the part of the writers, but rather to their determination to supplant the Buddhist stories by stories still more wonderful, and at the same time more stimulating to the polluted minds of the people.

Thus, indirectly, Buddhism was to be supplanted. How could it now maintain its existence? It was beaten with its own weapons. But the Brahmans were not satisfied with assailing it indirectly. They made a direct attack upon it by representing Buddha as the ninth 'descent' of Vishnu. The gods and the daityas (the latter pretty much corresponding to the Titans of classical mythology) had warred with one another, and the gods had been defeated, whereupon they implored Vishnu to destroy their victorious foes. The god accordingly became incarnate in the form of a naked ascetic on the banks of the Narmada river, and with glozing words overturned the religion of the Vedas, and thus effected the destruction of those whom he had so seduced. Of the many daring conceptions of the Brahmans this may be called the most horrible. Of all their divinities Vishnu is believed to be the one in whom especially resides the attribute of *truth*, yet even he is declared to have become incarnate for

the purpose of disseminating γ lie and plunging grants and men into perdition¹ We apprehend it would be difficult to find γ lower depth than this even in the lowest Pagan faith

We have spoken of three of Vishnus γ avatars These are sometimes said to have been twenty two in all but the great descents are ten In a celebrated passage of the Bhagavad Gita Krishna thus explains to Arjuna the reason of the descents

When fades the true and flourishes the false
Tis then tis then that I myself create—
The good to save the wicked to destroy
To shield the right from age to age reborn

A noble conception certainly but the avatars are in fact very unlike the idealized picture supplied by the poet

It is not very easy to extract any meaning out of the first three descents In the first of all the god becomes γ fish It has been conjectured that with their wonted spirit of accommodation in matters of faith the Brahmans may have introduced this conception in order to win over certain tribes that worshipped the fish or we should say that when they could not expel the worship they deified the fish We are more inclined however to the belief that we have in this descent of Vishnu γ tradition of the deluge which has been metamorphosed in the wild style of the Brahmans Manu the ancestor of the human race faithful among the faithless was divinely warned of the coming catastrophe Accordingly he built a ship and entered it along with seven holy men When the flood came

Vishnu assumed the form of a fish, and the ship was fastened to a horn on its head, and so drawn on and attached to a lofty peak in the Himalaya mountains till the deluge abated. This is very much the sort of story which the bizarre imagination of the Hindus would invent if they had heard of the deliverance of the righteous Noah and his family of seven persons. Another statement is that a dātya named Hayagriva stole the Vedas from the god Brahma when he was asleep, and that Vishnu, in the form of a fish, plunged into the deep to rescue them. This seems to indicate the restoration of religion.

The second descent of Vishnu was in the form of a tortoise. Some have said that this conception probably arose from a wish to win over worshippers of the tortoise. During the deluge various precious things had been lost in the ocean. Accordingly, for the purpose of recovering these, the god, in the form of a tortoise, took up his station at the bottom of the mid-ocean. A mountain was placed by the deities on his back, and the serpent Vasuki was twisted around it. The god and demons then took hold of the serpent, the former grasping his head and neck and the latter the tail, and, pulling against each other, churned the ocean—the mountain serving as a churning-stick. Fourteen precious things were thus churned out. It requires considerable ingenuity to discover the principle of the selection of these so-called ‘jewels’—among which are a marvellous horse, an elephant, the cow of plenty, the moon, nectar, and (oddly enough) poison. To give the rationale of things irrational is beyond us, but this descent should naturally indicate the reap-

pearance of objects which had been engulfed by the waters of the deluge

The third descent was in the form of a boar. The duty Hiranyaksha had carried the earth down into the abyss. Vishnu assumed the form of a boar fought with him for a thousand years and brought the earth up again. It looks very probable that this account refers to the reappearance of the dry land when the waters of the deluge had subsided.

The next descent was that of the man lion. The duty Hiranyakasipu had obtained from the god Brahma the boon that neither god nor man nor animal should be able to slay him. He conquered the three worlds and carried off the sacrifices that belonged to the gods. His son Irahada was a devoted worshipper of Vishnu and the father in wrath made every effort to slay him—throwing him into the fire plunging him in the deep and so on. All in vain. Irahada still called on Vishnu and was rescued. The duty indignantly asked, Where is your god? The son answered, I everywhere. Is he in this pillar? shouted the duty striking it. Instantly the pillar opened and Vishnu issued from it in the form of a creature that was neither god nor man nor beast but a man lion and at once tore the duty in pieces. We may with some probability hold this legend to refer to a struggle between the followers of some of the aboriginal faiths with advancing Hinduism which ended in the triumph of the latter.

The fifth descent is said to have taken place in the Treta yuga or second age of the world. Bali, a descendant of Prahlada (mentioned above) was

engaged in offering sacrifices, with a view to displace India from his 'supreme dominion'. To prevent him from succeeding, Vishnu became incarnate in the form of Vamana, a Brahman dwarf, and begged of Bali as much territory as he could measure in three steps. The unsuspecting king said that this was a very poor request to be made to one who was sovereign of the three worlds—heaven, earth, and hell, why not ask more? With a show of profound humility, the incarnate deity replied that he did not desire and could not accept of more. His *guni* warned the monarch to beware of this extraordinary Brahman and his equally extraordinary modesty, but Bali would not listen to his remonstrances. The boon was granted. Whereupon Vamana, spreading out his form to vast dimensions, strode with two steps through heaven and earth, and then putting his foot on Bali's head (or body, as it is otherwise expressed), crushed him down to hell. There can hardly be any doubt as to the historical meaning of this legend. It evidently refers to the mode in which the wily Brahmans obtained their supreme authority, by wheedling the unsuspecting rulers of the land. This explanation is confirmed by the fact that Bali is still commemorated, at least in Western India, and that the return of his happy reign is earnestly implored¹

¹ The people throw away all the dirt and sweepings of their houses, and with exuberant joy and the clash of musical instruments, exclaim in their uncultured rhymes—

‘Let pain and sorrow pack,
And Bali's reign come back!’

The sixth descent of Vishnu was Parasurama (Rama with the axe) He was the son of a Brahman father and a Kshatriya mother (In this we have a reminiscence of the time when inter marriage between people of different castes was still allowed) The Kshatriya kings were tyrannizing over the Brahmans for example the father of Parasurama had his cow taken from him whereupon Parasurama who armed with his tremendous axe was irresistible slew the offender His sons retaliated by slaying Parasurama's own father It was now internecine war and the champion with the axe travelling over the earth twenty one times cleared it of the hated Kshatriyas with the exception of a few children for whom their mothers implored mercy at the Brahmans' retreats

The meaning of this legend hardly requires explanation That the Kshatriya race was ever annihilated or nearly so is utterly improbable but it suited the purpose of the usurping Brahmans to maintain that none had henceforth a right to claim the time honoured name of Kshatriya

The seventh descent was in the person of Rama or Ramachandra His history is contained in the great heroic poem called the Ramayana It is highly probable that the original form of the Rama legend was of Buddhist origin and written in the interests of Buddhism The Buddhist virtue of gentleness still generally adheres to Rama but the poet Valmiki has with no small skill transformed the earlier legend and made it support the claims of Brahmanism The poem may have assumed its present form a little before the Christian era The hero god Rama has

long been one of the most popular divinities, and this is partly owing to his generally attractive character, the womanly virtues of his wife Sita, and the history, at once romantic and pathetic, of the loving pair. Moreover, Valmiki writes in melodious verse. The version of the poem in Hindi, which is the most widely diffused of the vernacular tongues of India, is also an attractive and highly popular production.

Rama was the eldest son of Dasaratha, king of Ayodhya (Oude). When a youth, he won his bride Sita by being able to bend a wonderful bow belonging to her father, King Janaka of Mithila¹. His step-mother intrigued against him, and he and his attached wife were sent into banishment, in the Dandaka forest, which covered a great part of the country north of the Godavari river. Sita, in Rama's absence is carried off to Lanka (Ceylon) by its demon-king Ravana—a personage with ten heads and twenty arms². Rama, with the assistance of the monkey-king Sugriva, collects an army of monkeys, and advances to the straits that separate Ceylon from India. The way in which he

¹ This account does not seem to be in the Ramayana.

² Valmiki makes Sita thus bid farewell to her retreat.

'Oh Janasthana's flowering bowers, my dear and happy haunts, farewell!'

When Rama to his cot returns, his sorrowing Sita's story tell
And thou, my loved Godavari, where whilom I so often strayed,
And watched thy flocks of water fowl, and heard their wild songs as
they played,

Let thy sad waters murmur it as home he wanders by thy shore,
And tell him with their mournful plash, that Sita meets his steps no
more.'

(Quoted from an old number of the *Westminster Review*)

bridged the straits is described with even more than the usual liveliness of Hindu imagination *inter alia* Hanuman the monkey brought mountains to cast into the sea millions at a time a mountain on each hair of his body Ravana is vanquished Sita is recovered Rama returns in triumph to Ayodhya and is crowned king But as Sita had lived for some time in the house of Ravana he cruelly dismissed her although of her chastity there was no question Then Sita entered the fire which however refused to burn her and on this her husband took her back The legend altogether is full of the romantic tales which delight the Hindu but from the extravagance of which the Western mind turns with disrelish Our readers may have a good idea of Rama's exploits if they remember those of Jack the Giant killer which probably charmed them in their childhood The Hindu imagination has never risen above the childish stage

Still more popular than the popular Rama is Krishna the ninth incarnation of Vishnu but morally he is immensely inferior Krishna was the eighth son of Vasudeva and Devaki It had been predicted that Kansa the king of Mathura would be killed by one of the sons of Vasudeva and Devaki The king accordingly imprisoned Vasudeva and his wife and killed six of their children as they were successively born The seventh was miraculously saved The eighth was Krishna whose name means the black one The father fled from Mathura with the child and confided him to the care of a herdsman called Nanda who brought him up in Vrindavana at some

distance from Mathura. The imagination of Hindu poets luxuriates in the description of the sports of Krishna and his young companions. Even as a child he performed the most stupendous miracles. Being swallowed by a frightful winged creature which Kansa had sent to destroy him, he made it feel so uncomfortable that it vomited him up again, whereupon he tore its mouth open and killed it. At the same time he performed all sorts of naughty tricks. He delighted in stealing milk, curds, and butter. His foster-mother had to bind him with a rope to keep him out of mischief, but he made short work of the rope—he ate it up. It would have been well had matters ended there. He delighted to sport with the female cowherds of Vrindavana, and it is especially in describing this part of his history that the purient imagination of the Hindu poets is seen to run riot. Of course we cannot dwell on the subject at any length, a few hints must suffice. He had eight chief wives, the queen of all, Rukmini, had been betrothed to another, but on her marriage-day Krishna carried her off in a chariot and made her his own wife. The total number of his other wives, or mistresses, was sixteen thousand. The Gopis (female cowherds) went one day to bathe in the river Yamuna (Jumna), and, while they were doing so, Krishna stole their clothes and carried them up into a tree, in the branches of which he hid himself. He embarked with them at another time in a boat on the river, the boat began to leak terribly, and Krishna made the Gopis stop the leak with their clothes. Sporting with the multitude of women, he so multiplied himself that each believed

she had Krishna all to herself. The god Indra (by no means a spotless character) was disgusted at Krishna's intercourse with the Gopis and poured down torrents of rain on him and them whereupon Krishna lifted the chief of mountains Govarddhana from its stony base and for several days and nights held it over their heads as an umbrella supporting it with one hand—indeed as is generally said on the tip of his finger. And so on. The miracles ascribed to Krishna are among the most extravagant as they are the most immoral recorded in Hindu books.

It is of importance to note that Krishna is a diviner being than Rama—that is to say while Rama is but a partial manifestation of divinity with only half the essence of Vishnu belonging to him Krishna is a complete manifestation—the four armed Vishnu in the fullness of deity. Partly for this reason and partly we fear, because of the licentious stories told regarding him he is decidedly more popular than the warlike Rama and the multitudinous mistresses of Krishna are more familiar to the mind of India than Sita with all her womanly grace and virtue. And yet this dreadful being is extolled by the author of the Bhagavad Gita a man of high intellectual culture as the god of gods and that supreme position is vindicated for him in stately and sonorous strains throughout that striking poem. How can we explain this? It is exceedingly difficult to fix the dates of any Sanskrit works except the Vedas but we believe that when the Gita was composed—the later parts probably in the third century after Christ—the disgusting legends regarding Krishna had assumed no

definite shape, and the author of the Gita may have ignored them, or indeed, have been unacquainted with them. But farther, it is easy to suppose (as has been mentioned above, p 76) that he had become acquainted with part of the evangelic history. Then, just as the Ramayana appears to have metamorphosed a Buddhist sage into a Hindu god, so it is probable that the author of the Gita adopted the great conceptions regarding the divinity and incarnation of Christ, and applied them to Krishna as a personage already famous in Indian story. The Gita is inserted in the vast Mahabharata, but there is no probability of its having originally formed a part of that strangely composite work. We may compare it to a mistletoe growing on an oak. It is in the Mahabharata we first see Vishnu exalted to supreme divinity. He became incarnate in Krishna, who may have been, as some believe, originally a tribal god of the Rajputs (the great military race in Central India)—probably a hero exalted into a god. The names of Christ and Krishna are totally unlike in sense, and not like in sound¹, yet the former may have suggested the latter as the personage whom the poet might represent as the supreme divinity. Still, this is a possibility only, and the slight resemblance may be accidental. Krishna, as conceived by the Hindus now, is a strangely mixed character. He is the warlike prince of Dwarka, in Gujarat, he is the licentious cowherd of Vrindavana, and he is the Supreme Divinity

¹ The word 'Krishna' is composed of *Kṛ* (not in any case *Kh*), a semi-vowel which is represented by *r* or *l*, a third letter represented by *sh*, and a fourth by *n*. But in some parts of India Krishna is pronounced Krista.

incarnate. He almost realizes the extraordinary picture suggested in the first lines of Horace's *Art Poetica*. Unhappily the Hindu mind delights especially in the foul tales told of him in the second of these characters and among the embellishments of Hindu dwellings may often be found pictures representing him sporting with the Gopis. The influence for evil which the story of Krishna's early life has had in debasing the Hindu mind is immense. We have still to add how this extraordinary being died. After the great war between the Kauravas and Pandavas he retreated with his followers to his capital Dwāraka in Gujarat. After effecting the destruction of the Yādavas the race to which he belonged he himself was killed by the arrow of a hunter who mistook him for a deer as he was sitting under a tree and his parents in consequence committed suicide.

A French writer M. Jacolliot has been capable of the stupendous blunder of maintaining that in the history of Christ we find much that has been borrowed from the history of Krishna. No Oriental scholar can tolerate such an idea. Chronology and geography are wholly against it. Had it been true it would have been the most astonishing instance of transfiguration on record. The fierce warrior turned into the Prince of peace, the debauched cowherd of Vrindavana into a being possessed of every moral excellence! By what process of moral alchemy could such a transformation have been wrought? But it is alas! too easy to show how from such muddy sources as the *Gospel of the Infancy* the Hindu poets,

in a time of great moral debasement, might gradually evolve the pestilential tale of which we have ventured to recite only the less disgusting portions

Of Buddha, the ninth descent of Vishnu, we have already had occasion to speak at sufficient length when treating of Buddhism (See p. 104)

The tenth descent is called the Kalki avatara. It is still future. As the present, or fourth, age of the world goes on, iniquity will more and more prevail. 'Wealth and piety will decrease day by day, until the world will be utterly depraved'. The people, unable to bear the heavy burdens imposed by their kings, will seek refuge among the valleys of the mountains, and will live on wild honey, herbs, roots, fruits, flowers, and leaves. 'No man's life will exceed three and twenty years'. Then to redress the awful evil, Vishnu will appear in the form of a warrior, mounted on a white horse, and holding a sword in his right hand. Associating a thousand Brahmans with himself, he will utterly destroy all scorers, all neglecters of religion, and all the enemies of the Brahmans,—'All Mlecchhas (foreigners), thieves, and all whose minds are devoted to iniquity'. And so the 'Age of Truth' returns, and for a long time all is purity and peace.

But only for a time. Other ages follow, each worse than the preceding. Here seems to be the suitable place to mention the doctrine of the four ages (*yugas*) of the world³. The first is the *Krita*

¹ So the Vishnu Purana.

- Ibid

³ These have a remarkable resemblance to the four ages of classical mythology

or *Satya Yuga*—the Age of Truth which extends over the period of 1 728 000 years. The second is the *Treta* which lasts for 1 296 000 years. The third is the *Dwapa* of 864 000 years and the last is the *Kali* lasting 432 000 years. The first three it will be seen are multiples of the last by 4 3 and 2. The four ages together endure for 4 320 000 years. A thousand such periods are a *Kalpa* and constitute a day of *Brahma*. The life of *Brahma* extends to 1 hundred years—each comprising three hundred and sixty of his days. The sum total might be given in figures—we could not attempt to do it in words.

CHAPTER VII

THE EPIC POEMS

THE descents of Vishnu are first fully developed in the two great heroic poems the Ramayana and the Mahabharata. Although not equal in authority to the Vedas, Daisanas and Puranas, yet they are held in high estimation, and may be styled semi-sacred.

The Ramayana is probably the more ancient at least, certain parts of it seem older than anything contained in the Mahabharata. But each work has sustained alterations. The name Ramayana denotes *the going of Rama*—the warrior god of whom we have had occasion to speak at considerable length. The author is said to have been Valmiki, of whose real existence there seems little doubt. There is considerable unity in the plan of the poem, though it can hardly be the work of a single author. Valmiki is said to have lived at Chitrakut, a mountain not far from the modern Allahabad. Of the date when he lived we cannot speak with certainty, it was probably about the Christian era¹. The poem

¹ Weber finds traces of Greek influences in the poem. He believes that the rape of Helen and the siege of Troy were in the mind of the

professes to consist of seven books containing 24 000 slokas each sloka being equal to four octo syllabic lines of English verse. But there are two recensions of the work—one more concise in diction and more archaic in its forms and probably more like the original poem. Luxuriance extravagance we are of course to look for in a Hindu book—but Valmiki is a true poet—many passages are marked by a natural pathos and he is comparatively free from those *conceits* which characterize so many Hindu writers. Certainly however the whole is not of uniform merit.

We need not dwell at much length on the Rāmāyaṇa as we have already traced the career of Kāma in speaking of the seventh *aśvamedha* (p. 109). The subject of the poem as it stands is usually said to be the extension of Aryan civilization to Southern India and Ceylon chiefly by means of conquest. But again it may refer to a struggle between the Hindus of India and the Buddhists of Ceylon.

The second epic poem the Mahābhārata is a much larger work consisting of eighteen books and 100 000 slokas—the most stupendous poem which the world has seen. It is a vast encyclopædia of matters historical religious and philosophical. It is ascribed to Vyāsa i.e. the arranger—a sage of whom nothing certain is known. Different parts of the work must be of different dates though the arranger has tried to give a kind of historical unity to the grand

poet when he describes Sita and the conquest of Lanka. Sir Monier M. Williams also points out analogies between characters described in the Illiads with several in the Rāmāyaṇa.

storehouse of legends. In its present form it cannot well be older than the sixth or seventh Christian century¹

The subject of the work is the great war between the Pandavas and their cousins the Kauravas. The former there were five, of the latter a hundred. At first they lived together under the care of Drona, the father of the Kauravas. Quarrels arose for under their tutor Drona the princes were taught to guide the elephant, to drive the chariot, to throw the javelin, to hurl the battle-axe, and to slay the enemy, and in all these royal exercises they excelled their cousins. The poet's sympathy is from the outset, with the former, to whom he ascribes all manly virtues. The Kauravas try to kill them, but they escape. When wandering they hear that Drupada, the king of Panchala, holds a *Swayamvara* a contest for the hand of his daughter Draupadi. Multitudes of people gather to take part, or to be witnesses of the tournament, we may call it. Draupadi is to be the reward of him who excels in archery. Arjuna—one of the noblest characters in Hindu story—gains the precious prize, but we are startled to read that the lady becomes the wife of all the five brothers in common. This circumstance Brahmanical commentators are eager to explain and, as far as possible, excuse, although

¹ 'That this huge composition was a production of successive ages clearly results from the multifariousness of its contents, the difference of style which characterizes its various parts, and even from the contradictions which disturb its harmony'—*Goldstuecker* (in *Chambers' Cyclopaedia*)

the fact of most of the brothers having other wives of their own makes it difficult to do so¹

The kingdom is then divided between the Kauravas and the Pandavas and for a time all is prosperity. Yudhishthira the eldest of the Pandavas is a model king and his subjects rejoice in his beneficent rule. But Duryodhana the head of the Kauravas still plots against his rivals. He invites them to a gambling festival and Yudhishthira feels he cannot in honour refuse the challenge. He is matched with an unfair opponent and loses. He stakes one thing after another and still loses. He strikes himself and loses. He stakes Drupadi (what right had he to stake more than one fifth part of her?) and loses Drupadi with dishevelled hair and weeping bitterly is dragged before the assembled chiefs but after a time she and her husbands are allowed to depart in peace. Then shortly after another challenge is given. Another game is to be played and the losers are to go into banishment for twelve years. Once more the loaded dice are used the Pandavas are beaten and go mournfully into exile with Drupadi in bitter grief. So they remain in the woods for twelve years—feeding on roots and fruits and the animals which the brothers slay with their arrows. Bhima the Hercules of the party when they are utterly exhausted with fatigue carries the lady and his brothers on his back and under his arms and calmly marches on. When twelve sad years are come and gone they act as servants to the king of

¹ Polyandry is still practised in Southern India by the military race the Nairs. Also Photin Iulu &c. in the Himalayas.

Viiata The Kauravas, discovering their foes, attack and carry off 'a thousand cows' belonging to the king Arjuna (in this too resembling Hercules) has in disguise been keeping the women's apartments, but now goes forth as charioteer to the king's sons, and performs prodigies of valour. So do his brothers, and the Pandavas return in triumph home. But this is only the commencement of renewed hostilities on the part of the Kauravas. Whereupon Krishna, the prince of Dwarka, is sent as an ambassador to try to secure peace, but his efforts are vain. The preparations for war go on, and the two great hosts ere long meet in battle-array on the plain of Kurukshetra, near Delhi. Every chief in India takes a side. The battle continues for eighteen days. Huge elephants, war-horses and chariots, bows and arrows, iron maces, drums, war-shells, horns, and trumpets, jackals howling, vultures screaming, lightnings flashing, thunders roaring, awful omens of every kind, all these things are lavishly thrown into the description of the great hurly-burly. The chiefs all save one are regardless of the omens. But just as the shells sound to the encounter, the heart of the noble Arjuna misgives him. He is struck with horror at the thought of slaughtering his kinsmen, and his resistless bow, Gandiva, drops from his hand. It is at this point that the philosophical poem, the Bhagavad Gita, is interpolated (see above, p. 71). Krishna reproaches Arjuna for 'weakness,' and, with divine authority, commands him to rush into the fight. He does so, and his murderous arrows fly thick and fast. A series of single combats is then described,

almost reminding us of the battle scenes of the Iliad. The Pandavas are finally victorious and three of the Kauravas are all that remain of the once mighty host of foes. The triumphant warriors go to sleep securely on the field of battle but the Kauravas come in the dark and slay them all except the five great brothers and their wife. Lamentations follow. The funeral ceremonies are then performed and the bodies are burnt. The five brothers have now none to oppose them but they are not happy. Friends and kinsmen have been slaughtered all is desolation round them. Earth is no scene of peace they must seek it in Svarga the heaven of Indra. They accordingly depart with Drupadi accompanied by a dog. Arjuna slings his mighty bow and irresistible arrows into the sea. They pass Dwarka and proceed northward to the Himalayas and see at last the mighty mountain Meru. But they are sorely worn. Drupadi first falls and dies. Then brother after brother falls and dies. Still Yudhishtira, followed by the faithful dog holds on. He reaches the entrance of Indra's heaven. Indra tells him that he can enter heaven with his body — all his brothers and Drupadi he will find there before him but there is no admittance for dogs! The prince declares that he cannot forsake his faithful companion. Whereupon he learns that the animal is really Yama the king of the dead in disguise and that Indra had been only testing him when he refused to admit the dog. Still one great trial remains. The prince on entering heaven sees the Kauravas but not his brothers. He refuses to remain

apart from these, and learning that they are in hell, he proceeds to 'share their sorrows there. But the scene passes, all this has been intended only as a test of his virtue, the seeming hell is changed to heaven, and thereafter the brothers, along with Draupadi, enjoy supreme felicity in the palace of India.

We have thus presented an outline of the story which is embodied in the great poem, but it must be remembered that the narrative is frequently broken in upon by disquisitions on matters moral, religious, or metaphysical. Thus, besides the Bhagavad Gita, which is thrust into the heart of the sixth book, nearly the whole of books thirteen and fourteen is occupied with a discourse chiefly on the duties of rulers, which was delivered on the occasion of Yudhishtira's coronation. The worthy Bhishma who delivers it proses in a manner rather tiring to the reader, although we are not told that his hearers ventured to complain of his prolixity.¹

Whatever impression the philosophical and moral portions may have made on the Hindu mind, there is no question that the story contained in the Mahabharata has powerfully influenced nearly every part of India. 'The Five Pandavas' are almost everywhere mentioned as antique heroes of the noblest kind, and any great work in India that appears

¹ Two of the episodes thrust into the Mahabharata—viz. the Samatsujatiya and the Anugata—are translated and given along with the Bhagavad Gita in the eighth volume of the *Sacred Books of the East*. Neither of these works has attained much celebrity. Both are probably later than the Bhagavad Gita.

to surpass ordinary human power is generally ascribed to the wondrous brotherhood. Next to Sita the wife of Rama Drupadi—notwithstanding her startling marriage relations—is regarded as a type of true wifehood though habitual remembrance of one with such an environment of husbands cannot have been without a corrupting influence on the female mind.

Altogether the potency in the formation of Indian thought of the two epic poems has been immense. The most striking portions have been reproduced in the chief vernacular languages and so made accessible to the common people. We hardly know of any parallel case. No book or books had an influence corresponding to these great poems in the history of Rome. The poems of Homer may in popularity and power have equalled the two great Indian epic but certainly did not surpass them. On the land contained in these books the mind of India feeds up to the present day. Unhappily the land ends have in very many cases been conveyed to the popular mind through a polluted channel—that of the Puranas. Of the epic it is now time to speak with some fullness.

But first let us glance at some important innovations in Hinduism which are traceable in the Epic poems. It is interesting to note the gradual fading away of the Vedic faith and the introduction not only of new deities but of new ideas. Thus King Varuna once a being of unquelled majesty is on the way to become merely a regent of the waters. The ascetic Yogi has risen into great prominence and power.

The ancient spirit of pride and fierceness is modified. The sacrifice of animals is nearly ceasing. We

can hardly be wrong in ascribing chiefly to the influence of Buddhism this very important modification of the ancient faith

Yet this softening of the spirit does not extend to everything, thus, the dreadful rite of widow-burning has become common. With this exception, the sacrifice of living creatures is falling into disuse, and a belief in the meritorious character of giving gifts to Brahmans is taking its place. Come what changes there may, the priest unfailingly asserts himself¹.

¹ 'The peculiarity of the priest, as represented in the Epic poems, is that he glories in his sins'—PROF. HOPKINS

CHAPTER VIII

THE PURANAS

THE term Purana properly signifies old. The works so called are generally ascribed to Vyasa the mythical arranger of the Vedas themselves so that they would deserve the appellation old if the popular belief as to their authorship had any foundation. But it has no foundation. The Puranas in their present form at all events are very modern compilations. It is however possible that ancient materials may have been drawn upon in the composition of the so called Puranas and this may perhaps serve as an excuse for a designation which seems to have been adopted in order to impart the sanction of antiquity to novel compilations.

The Puranas are generally said to be eighteen in number but the list is differently given by different authorities and the claims of several usually named are questionable¹. There is a division of the Puranas

The usual list and order are as follow 1 Bhagvata 2 Padma 3 Vishnu 4 Siva 5 Bhagvata 6 Narada, Markandeya 8 Agni 9 Bhavishya 10 Brahma Vaivarta 11 Linga 12 Varaha 13 Skanda 14 Vamana 15 Kurma 16 Matsya 17 Garuda 18 Brahmanda. The Linga P. substitutes the Vayu for the Agni. The Agni substitutes the Vayu for the Siva. The Garuda substitutes the Vayu and Narayana for the Garuda and Brahmanda. The Matsya omits the Siva.

The Vaishnava Puranas are Nos 2 3 5 6 10 12 17 in the above list. The Saiva ones are 4 8 11 13 15 16. No 7 is chiefly in praise

generally accepted by Brahmans, into three classes the first includes those relating to Brahma, the second, those that extol Vishnu, the third, those that extol Siva¹. Each class contains six. But this division is quite unnatural. Seven of the entire number, or even eight, are mainly in praise of Vishnu, six support the honour of Siva, while the rest are certainly in no special way connected with Brahma.

The subjects treated in a Purana are usually stated to be the following five: 1. Primary creation, 2. Secondary creation, i.e. the destruction and renovation of the universe, 3. Genealogies of gods and patriarchs, 4. *Manvantaras*, i.e. the reigns of the Manus, 5. The histories of the kings of the solar and lunar races. But this description does not fully apply to a single Purana, and some of them have hardly any resemblance to it. They seem to have been intended as repositories of all existing knowledge on matters connected with religion. Though said to have been written in the first instance only for women and Sudras, yet they became ere long the authorized source of instruction for others also. Religion, philosophy, science, history, geography, all that came, according to Hindu conception, under these comprehensive designations, belonged to the Puranas. The Agni Purana professes to teach even alchemy, medicine, rhetoric, prosody, and grammar, and to reveal these sciences with infallible authority.

of Durga. No 14 praises both Vishnu and Siva. No 9 is chiefly in honour of Brahma, Vishnu, and Siva, and also of the god Vashti.

¹ It is given by the author of the oldest Sanskrit dictionary, Amara Sinha, probably after the Christian era.

Generally speaking the Puranas must have been compiled between the twelfth and seventeenth centuries. One or two may possibly be a century or so earlier than the twelfth.

Along with these compositions we must mention the Upa Puranas or minor Puranas. The character of these is almost identical with that of the Puranas themselves. They also are eighteen in number¹. There is considerable uncertainty about many of them and several are very seldom met with. They are as sectarian as the Puranas. They are probably in most cases later than the Puranas to which they may be called appendices.

The Puranas and Upa Puranas draw largely from the Ramayana and Mahabharata but as a rule they are very far inferior in point of literary merit to the two great epics. There is a kind of glitter about the Bhagavata Purana but the style of the books is for the most part deplorably bad. All naturalness and truth and even common sense have vanished and little remains but extravagance in thought and false rhetoric in language.

The religion of the Puranas is exceedingly unlike that of the Vedas. It is an extraordinary blending of pantheism and polytheism. The pantheism is not

¹ Their names are as follows: 1. Sanatkumara Purana 2. Nrisimha 3. Naradiya 4. Siva 5. Dhanurmasa 6. Kapala 7. Matsya 8. Ausa 9. Varaha 10. Ishvara 11. Samba 12. Nandi 13. Sat 14. Parashara 15. Alkya 16. Maheswara 17. Bhagavata (possibly a mistake for Bhargava) 18. Vaidika. It is the most usual list.

The picture of religion which is unfolded by these is a caricature of that afforded by the Vedic works. It was drawn by a priestcraft interested in submitting to its sway the popular mind and unscrupulous as to the means it used. — *Gellistler*

the spiritualistic pantheism of the Vedānta, which denies the reality of matter, the outward world is believed to exist, and to be a part of God. But again, there is a triad of gods—Brahma, Vishnu and Siva, in whom the Supreme Spirit, on becoming, conscious, manifests himself. It is customary to style these beings Creator, Preserver, and Destroyer, respectively, but the distinction is not at all well retained either in the Purāṇas or elsewhere. The idea of the unity of the three gods is a philosophical refinement, rather than a popular belief. The part of Vishnu holds his favourite duty to perform the three functions, and the partisan of Siva asserts this regarding Siva. Confused and conflicting statements everywhere abound in reference to this question. The Trimurti, or union of the three great gods, is not unfrequently represented, and when this is done the figure contains one body with three heads. The head of Brahma is in the middle, Vishnu is on his right, and Siva on the left. The most famous figure of this kind is the one in the chief cave in the island of Elephanta, near Bombay. In this case Siva seems to have absorbed into himself the two other deities. The famous monosyllable *Om*, to which, when rightly uttered, most stupendous powers are ascribed, is generally said to denote the triad of gods, being equivalent to *a, u, m*—*a* denoting Vishnu, *u* Siva, and *m* Brahma. Lastly on this head, it must be remembered that there are said to be three qualities—goodness, passion, and darkness¹, which are embodied respectively in Vishnu, Brahma, and Siva. The quality

¹ *Sattva*, *rajas*, and *tamas*. These are the three famous *gunas*—

of *passion* which belongs to Brahma may be interchanged with *act* *it*—but the ascription of *darkness* to a divine being is very startling inasmuch as according to the Hindu definition it is the root of folly delusion lust and pride. It is so far satisfactory that in the Puranas taken as a whole Vishnu is more prominent than Siva who is possessed of such undivine attributes as these.

We cannot stop to draw nice distinctions between the faith embodied in the Epic poems and that contained in the Puranas. The great supersession of earlier conceptions which we witness in the former is carried out more fully in the latter—the difference is in degree rather than in kind. In both classes of writings the divergence from the Vedic faith is very remarkable. Old deities have been obscured many entirely new deities have appeared. The three eleven divinities of the Vedas are turned into three hundred and thirty millions (or three eleven crores) of gods—a fantastic hyperbole probably grounded on erroneous etymology. Of course names have not been given to more than a fraction of the mighty host. The haughty Indra who as we have seen above takes precedence of all gods becomes in the Puranas quite a subordinate figure and Varuna who in point of moral dignity stands unique in the Vedic pantheon retains simply the regency of the waters. Vishnu in the Veda is often associated with Indra but is decidedly inferior to him. He became in the estimation of his worshippers the greatest of

literally better. The unconditioned : where there do not exist—as in the Supreme Being of the Vedant school.

the gods Krishna, who as time goes on becomes (as in the Gita) not only the greatest incarnation of Vishnu but the all-comprehending Deity, was not known in early days. Rama, who now stands next to Krishna in popularity, was equally unknown. Siva, Durga, Kali—these also are unknown to the Veda, but in modern times they have become mighty divinities. It frequently happens also that there are gods of very great local celebrity, who are not only unknown to the Veda, but unknown to India generally. Thus the glory of Vithoba, who is a form of Krishna, is celebrated by Tukaram and other poets in the most exalted strains, but his name is barely known beyond the limits of the Maratha country. Siva is for the most part worshipped under the emblem of the Linga (or phallus) but regarding such a worship the Vedas are wholly silent.

No dogma of Hinduism, we said above (p. 50), has stamped a deeper impress on the mind of India than that of Transmigration. There is one text in the Veda which some have believed to imply the belief, but there is little probability of this being the true meaning¹. It is not easy to trace its introduction into Hindu thought, but the wide diffusion of the idea proves that it not unnaturally suggests itself as an explanation of the unequal apportionment of good and evil in the world². The Hindu begins with the assumption that this rests on moral grounds, a man's

¹ The term *bahuprajah*, which the modern Hindu critic Sivananda rendered 'subject to many births' or 'having many children,' very probably means the latter. See *Rig Veda* i. 164. 72.

² Cicero calls it an ancient belief.

birth and condition depend on previous character. The Brahmins of later times have carried out this conception as they do every conception into immeasurable detail. They dwell on Transmigration with great earnestness and judiciously declare the specific birth that is the reward for each specific character. This is done with a minuteness and gravity that provoke a smile. Souls endued with the character of truth (*satva*) become gods; those possessed of passion (*rajas*) become men; those that have darkness (*tamas*) become beasts. This bold generalization however is not faithfully carried out. Thus those that possess most of the darkness character become worms insects fish serpents &c. those who have less become elephants horses lions tigers boars Sudras and Mlechchhas (i.e. barbarians foreigners) while those that have still less of evil become public play actors birds cheats Rakshasas (a kind of demon) and vampires. (The legislator has apparently forgotten what was said about those who possess the *tamas* quality becoming *beasts*.) He who kills a Brahman is born a thousand times as a dog a boar an ass a camel a bull a goat a sheep a stag a bird or as a low caste man. A Brahman who drinks spirituous liquor will be a worm an insect a grasshopper a fly feeding on ordure or some mischievous animal. If a man steals grain he becomes a rat; if milk a cow; if oil a cockroach; if salt a cricket —and so the list runs on with a minuteness of specification without a parallel in the annals of legislation. The apportionments of punishment are often rather startling. Every crime committed against a Brahman is

especially heinous, and visited with corresponding chastisement. Offences against the rules of caste are equally dreadful. The successive births, we saw already, are all but infinite in number. At last, when (as by a series of purgatorial fires) its sin has been removed and all the merited chastisement endured, the soul is reunited to the Supreme, from whom it originally came—as a drop of water mingles with the ocean and is lost in its immensity. Then cease all individual existence and all consciousness of existence. This is the Indian idea of rest, of peace. But the prospect of attaining this deathlike quiet is fearfully dim and distant, and the Hindu mind contemplates with a feeling of unspeakable distress the awful, all but infinite, succession of migrations still awaiting it¹. And only he who has attained to perfect purity can escape this tremendous doom. So, then, they who are most deeply conscious of imperfection are most overwhelmed by the agonizing prospect before them, while it is the hardened sinner, whose conscience is seared as with a hot iron, that is best able to banish from his mind the thought of coming retribution.

¹ The playful yet pathetic lines are well known in which the Emperor Hadrian addressed his soul, as death was approaching—

‘Animula vagula blandula,
Hospes comesque corporis,
Quae nunc ibis in loca?’ &c

The feeling of curiosity expressed in Hadrian's lines becomes, in the case of the Hindu, one of terror. He would fain shut his eyes on the dreadful future, but it has a horrible fascination, which he cannot get rid of.

CHAPTER IX

THE TANTRAS THE SAKTI WORSHIP

WE come now to consider a class of works about which there is a difference of opinion among the Hindus some exalting them above all the other Sastias and others refusing to acknowledge them as in any sense sacred. We refer to the Tantas. The name may mean an instrument of faith. Most of them are probably later in origin than the Puranas. The Tantras have not received the same amount of attention as the works we have already referred to and we cannot wonder that so debased a literature should have repelled rather than attracted European scholars. We have no accurate list of the Tantras. Five or six are pretty well known but the number of Tantrical works is popularly believed to exceed that of the whole of the other Sastias. Properly a Tantra comprises five subjects viz creation and destruction of the world worship of the gods attainment of the supreme end means of obtaining union with the highest being. But (as in the case of the Puranas)

The following are the name of the best known Tantras. *Pudraṅga mālā Kalikatantra Malinivāna Iṣṭakṛatya Sūratāhāsa Mantramahodadhī Kamadhī Amṛtā Iṣṭā*

this theoretical division of subjects is frequently departed from. A Tantra is written in the form of a dialogue between Siva and his wife under one of her many forms. The goddess asks questions, to which Siva replies. The Puranas are intended for popular instruction, but a great air of mystery is thrown around all that is revealed in the Tantras. Their secrets must be communicated only to the initiated.

The Tantras inculcate the worship of the Sakti. This word originally means *power*, and it especially signifies the powers of the gods, particularly of Brahma, Vishnu, and Siva. In the modern form of Hinduism as exhibited in the Puranas, these powers are personalized and regarded as living beings—*avatars* of the deities¹. As Siva is, more than the other two, the deity of destruction, his *power*, as exerted through his wife—especially in the form of Kali—becomes something truly terrific. It is startling to find all that is most horrible and hideous embodied in the character and worship of a female divinity, but the logical Brahman shrinks from no moral consequences flowing from his assumed premises, he will cut right across the deepest instincts of humanity rather than abandon his theory.

We must not forget that the roots of the dreadful ideas and practices which we are about to describe are found in the Vedas, and still more in the Yoga philosophy, but probably the worship of the aborigines had a great influence on their development.

¹ SARASVATĪ, the goddess of speech and the arts, is the wife of Brahma, Lakshmi, or SRI, the goddess of wealth, is the wife of Vishnu. Parvati or more generally Uma, Durgā, or Kali, is the wife of Siva.

Cruel obscene and magical rites in the worship of female goddesses appear as early as the third century A.D.

The Tantras however are not all equally offensive. The worshippers of the Sakti (or Saktas as they are usually styled) are divided into two branches—those of the right hand and those of the left. In the tenets and rites of the former there is abundance of mystery, magic and downright folly, but the extreme of immorality is avoided. In the latter there is a sickening exhibition of the vilest passions of man, all revolting, unchecked. The worship of the Kālikā goddess and many of the rites of ancient Brahminism were deplorably immoral, but in the studied elaborate ritual of the Saktas there is an amount of evil which is certainly unsurpassed we believe unequalled in any other system. In a popular treatise like this it would be unpardonable to give a full account of anything so loathsome, yet without some distinct reference to it Hinduism cannot be fully understood.

The right hand section of the Saktas have departed from orthodox Hinduism in many respects. They offer bloody sacrifices and frequently beat the animal to death with their fists. But the left hand section plunges into the most revolting excesses. It is indispensable in the rites to employ at least one of five things the names of which begin with the letter M in Sanskrit—which are flesh fish wine women and certain magical gestures. A woman must be present as the living representative of the Sakti goddess. She is first stripped of all her clothing, wine and flesh are given to her and the company—which must

be composed of both sexes. The women drink first out of goblets of cocoa-nut or human skulls. The men then drink. No regard is paid to caste. Excitement, even intoxication, is produced by the abundant use of liquor. The lights are extinguished and then follow doings indescribable. Professor H. H. Wilson rightly designates these as 'most scandalous orgies'. The abominable character of the whole celebration is heightened by the declaration of the sect that all is done not for sensual gratification, but as an exalted form of divine worship. Professor Wilson thinks that this declaration may possibly be sincere, but if so, he adds, its promulgators 'must have been filled with a strange frenzy, and have been strangely ignorant of human nature'. It is, in fact, the most appalling exhibition of what is visible in several forms of Hindu worship—an effort to obtain the sanction of Heaven for indulgence in the basest lusts. 'Evil, be thou my good!' exclaimed the lost archangel, knowing that evil was evil still, but when the indulgence of the lowest appetites of human nature is believed to be the sublimest kind of worship, it must imply a still deeper fall than his. And yet the left-hand Saktas, in the most varied and repeated terms, declare that evil to them becomes good, and the designation they give to all who do not adopt their creed and rites is that of *pasu* (beasts).

It is distressing to see how little was done by the Sanskrit writers to refute or denounce such abominable practices. The great Sankara Acharya, who was most labourious and earnest in suppressing other heresies, does not seem to notice this worst of all

delusions¹ Of course any one who is known to indulge in such practices must be expelled from caste as acting contrary to caste obligations Still the number of those who are secretly enrolled as Saktas is believed to be exceedingly great All castes are admissible but the members are mostly Brahmans The sect flourishes chiefly in Bengal

We have often occasion to state how much Hinduism has drawn from Buddhism The loan was in some cases repaid It is sad to see that the Buddhism of Nepal and Tibet had been deeply influenced by the obscenity of the Tantras by the ninth century A D

We must still mention that there are practices less vile indeed and yet in one sense more horrible for example the rites by which power is gained over evil spirits The worshipper in this case comes alone to a place where dead bodies are burned or buried or where criminals are executed He seats himself on a corpse makes offerings and uses incantations and if he can go through the dreadful ritual without fear he obtains a mastery over demons and they become his slaves But woe to the poor wretch if his courage fail before the awful conjuration is complete¹

¹ T kram the Mantra poet however nouns the Sakta who is the consummation of all wickedness

CHAPTER X

THE HINDU SECTS

HINDUISM, as reconstructed after the fall of Buddhism, is split up into a multitude of divisions, or, as we may call them, sects. These are fairly enough classed under two chief heads—the Vaishnava sects, or those that hold Vishnu to be supreme, and the Saiva, or those that ascribe pre-eminence to Siva¹. It is perfectly possible that divisions pretty nearly corresponding to these may have existed even in Vedic days, and that they assumed far greater prominence while orthodox Brahmanism was engaged in a death-struggle with Buddhism. But the history of the sects can be traced with certainty only from the twelfth century after Christ.

The worship of the Trimurti does not seem at any time to have deeply penetrated the general mind. Even when it was professedly retained, one god—Vishnu or Siva—was represented as supreme, and the dogma of the triad was thus rendered meaningless. Sectarianism has frequently been very bitter, and has proceeded from words to murderous blows.

¹ There are also Sauras, or sun-worshippers, Garudiyas, or worshippers of Ganesa or Garud, and others.

I. VAISHNAVA SECTS

The chief of these are the following —

1. The *Kananyas* These derive their name from Kananyas a Brahman who was born near Madras about the middle of the twelfth century. Their worship is mainly addressed to Vishnu and his wife Lalshmi or to any one of their many manifestations—especially Rama or his wife Sita or these two together. The sacred formula by which a member is initiated into the sect is Om salutation to Rama (*Om Ramaya namah*). They hold the doctrine of duality (*Iti*) that is they admit the veritable existence of an external world as well as that of spirit. The latter is not devoid of qualities (as in the Vedanta) but is in fact possessed of all good qualities. They admit also the existence of individual souls though at times they peril of them as being or to be identified with God. They are exceedingly particular in the preparation and eating of food. If a stranger touch it or even see it in the process of cooking or when they are eating it they throw it away—generally burying it. Marks connected with Vishnu are painted or occasionally branded on them chiefly on the breast and upper arms. They wear a necklace composed of the berries of the *tulasi* plant (holy basil). Infinite importance is attached to all the symbolic marks they bear each becomes possessed of a kind of magical virtue. This sect originally spread furthest in the south and there it retains a powerful influence. In the north of India its sway has been less considerable.

2 The *Ramanandas* This sect was founded by Ramananda, a follower, if not an immediate scholar, of Ramanuja. His date is uncertain, it may be as late as the beginning of the fifteenth century. He resided at Benares, and it is especially in Northern India that his school prevails. His teaching did not differ very much from that of his master Ramanuja, but it was a system of somewhat greater freedom. He abolished the distinctions of caste among his followers, all men devoted to a religious life were brothers. In this he resembled Buddha, only going somewhat beyond him, and he resembled him also in his employment of the vernacular language. Its likeness in several points to Buddhism explains the prevalence of the system in the north of India. The formula of initiation is *Sri Rama* (Blessed Rama!). Ramananda had numerous disciples—twelve chief ones, it is said. Several Hindi writers whose writings have been very popular belonged to this sect, and the legends contained in such works as the *Bhakta Mala* of Nabhaji, are familiar to the Hindu people, at least, in Northern, Central, and Western India. Legends of saints are almost as popular as those of Rama and Krishna.

3 The sect we have now to speak of is devoted to Krishna, not Rama. It is the sect founded by Vallabha Acharya, who was probably born in 1479. His early life was spent at Gokula, near Mathura, on the banks of the Jumna. He travelled extensively, preaching his peculiar doctrines, and finally settled at Benares, where he had many disciples.¹

¹ Especially among the trading classes of Bhatias and Banyans.

His followers have multiplied especially in Western and Central India. The gurus or spiritual chiefs of this sect are known by the name of Maharyas (literally great king) and there may be sixty or seventy who are so designated. The great characteristic of the system is that it inculcates not fasting and mortification of the flesh but the indulgence of bodily appetites. It goes in truth almost as far in this direction as the Tantras of which we spoke above and it does so without any sense of shame or attempt at concealment. The gurus themselves soon came to be believed to be representatives or personations of the god and entitled to the same homage. Everything therefore connected with the Maharyas became holy divine: the water in which their feet were washed became nectar and even what was ejected from their mouths was greedily devoured. Could human folly go farther? It did. In more systems than one it had been said that *tan man dhan* (body mind property) all were to be devoted to the service of the guru but the atrocious doctrine was carried out to its fullest extent by Vallabha and his disciples. We do not need to point out what this implies especially in the case of female worshippers. Of course complaints arose. Ever since the writer went to India he was in the habit of hearing vehement denunciations of the wickedness of the Maharyas and at last in the year 1871 in a remarkable trial in the Supreme Court at Bombay the mystery of iniquity was fully brought to light to the horror of all who were not leagued for its support. Kar sandas Mulji a young man who boldly exposed the

atrocious deeds of the Mahatajas, has since then passed away, and in him India has lost a single-minded, energetic reformer whom she could very ill spare¹. It was hoped that the power of the sect was broken by the merciless exposure made at the trial, but the great majority of the followers of those wretched Mahatajas remain as besotted as before. Light, however, is slowly entering even into the Banyan and Bhatia communities, and the system of Vallabha Acharya must gradually pass away. Meanwhile, it gives food for truly sorrowful musing to see very large numbers of shrewd merchants and traders, who have a keen eye to business and are full of enterprise in all commercial operations, accepting such doctrines, and surrendering their wives and daughters to such horrible degradation. The intellect clear as noonday on ordinary matters, but on moral questions dark as Erebus!

4 The *Madhavacharyas*. This sect was founded by a Brahman of the same name, who was born in the year 1199 in South India, where his followers are chiefly found. The main characteristic of this school is that they affirm an eternal distinction between the Supreme Spirit and the individual soul. Thus they deny the doctrine of absorption, and the merging of the individual into the universal soul at death. Another peculiarity is a disposition to arrive at an understanding of, if possible, a com-

¹ We fear this admirable young man died broken-hearted. The opposition he encountered was more than his family could bear. They submitted, performed humiliating penances, and were received back into caste. Native reformers deserve much sympathy. Their life in many cases is a kind of martyrdom.

promise with the followers of Śiva. Images of Śiva in wife and his son Ganeśa are found in their temples along with those of Viṣṇu. Asceticism is carried by them to a greater length than by most other Vaiṣṇava sects. They practice celibacy and generally live in *maths* or monasteries under a superior.

, The followers of *Chaitanya*. These constitute a very large body in Bengal and Orissa but they have not much influence beyond these provinces. Chaitanya was a Brahman of Nadia near Calcutta born in the year 1486. He is said to have married a daughter of Vallabha Acharya but at the age of twenty five he became an ascetic. He was a man of enthusiastic temperament who believed he had frequent visions of Kṛṣṇa and his wives and it is generally held that in one of his fits of ecstasy he went into the sea at Puri in Orissa and dazzled by the glory of the sun shining on the waters proceeded on till he was drowned. His followers consider him an incarnation of Kṛṣṇa.

According to Chaitanya Kṛṣṇa is the Supreme. The worship consists chiefly in the repetition of the name of the god. One spiritual leader of the sect has been the envy of after times because living sequestered from the world in a wood he was enabled to repeat the sacred name three hundred thousand times every day.

There are two very important characteristics of this sect—first the immense importance they attach to *bhakti* or devotion and secondly their exaltation of the guru which often amounts to deification. As however other Vaiṣṇavas have the same character

istics, we defer our consideration of these two points till we finish our enumeration of the other sects.

Finally, although the sect has greatly lost both character and influence in Bengal, in which its professed followers were and are most numerous, yet the name of Chaitanya is still held in great reverence. Babu Keshub Chunder Sen never lost an opportunity of lauding him to the skies as a most illustrious and enlightened teacher, one of the greatest of prophets. Mr. Sen's admiration was altogether extravagant, Chaitanya's writings are nothing but wild rhapsodies, emotion without thought. But the people of Bengal are passionately desirous of having 'a prophet of their own', and the glory of Chaitanya will perhaps only by slow degrees pass away.

6 The followers of *Swami Narayan* have lately risen to considerable importance in Gujarat. The leader was disgusted with the excesses of the Vallabhacharyas, and inculcated purity of life. He prescribed the worship of Krishna, along with a reverence for the sun as the best symbol of divinity. His followers may be somewhat under 200,000¹.

Various Vaishnava sects have sprung up of recent years, among which the most remarkable are the Kaitabhajas in Bengal. This name means 'worshippers of the Creator'. The Spashtadayakas and the Sahujas are of less importance.²

The doctrine of *bhakti*, which is characteristic of all the sects that have been mentioned, is of great

¹ Bishop Heber had an interesting interview with this man.

² A tolerably full account of the Hindu sects is given by Professor H. H. Wilson. See his works as edited by Dr. R. Rost, vol. 1.

importance. The word properly means devotion or affection fixed on God. In popular Hinduism it is maintained that there are three great means or *ways* to salvation—the way of works, the way of knowledge, and the way of devotion. The works are ceremonial observances—especially as prescribed in the ritual of the Veda (*Brahmana*). The knowledge is speculation on the Divine nature as exhibited in the Upanishads and philosophical writings. The devotion is attachment to some particular deity. The term is almost confined to the worship of Vishnu in some one of his many manifestations—but particularly Krishna. The idea of *bhakti* is not found in early Hinduism. The Vedas indeed speak of *śraddha* or trust in the deities, but about the emotional part of religion they are almost or altogether silent. The introduction of *bhakti* therefore and the remarkable extent to which it has influenced the later Hindu mind are matters which have been keenly discussed. Did the idea of love and devotion—so far removed from ancient orthodoxy—develop itself spontaneously in India or was it imported from without? Professor Weber of Berlin is the great champion of the latter opinion, and his opponents do not appear to us to have answered his formidable arguments. It may be true that the Hindu mind was prepared for its reception by its past experience. It had been wearied by stupendous ceremonialism, it was sick of subtle speculation equally endless and profitless. The mind was ready to receive the great idea that religion consisted in love to Deity. The doctrine comes into the Hindu system somewhat abruptly. It begins to

appears in the Bhāgavad Gītā, the great eclectic poem of which we have already treated. The idea is developed and systematized in the Bhakti Sūtras of Sandilya. If not primarily derived from Christian teachings, we deem it abundantly probable that it was influenced and developed by them. Of the possibility and probability of Hindu thought having been affected by Christianity we have already spoken.¹

The conception of *bhakti*, or devotion to the god, was soon carried to a wild extreme. It was held to consist of five degrees: 1. Quiet contemplation of the deity. 2. Slavery, or absolute consecration to his service. 3. Friendship for him. 4. Love to him, resembling that of children to parents. 5. Passionate attachment, like what the Gopis felt for Kṛṣṇa. When devotion to deity was likened to the last of the five, the Hindu mind had embraced a conception fearfully perilous, or rather, absolutely profane, for the love of the Gopis for Kṛṣṇa was adulterous. And this melting love was held to be a far higher attainment than knowledge, ceremonial works, subjugation of the passions, or any moral excellence. The worshipper was not to rest until tears of ardent love were streaming down his cheeks. The worship soon became impure. Descriptions of the relation between Kṛṣṇa and his votaries appeared which were utterly licentious. By the twelfth century the poet Jayadeva 'displayed a sensual delirium which defies all translation'. It is a profoundly melancholy task to trace this gradual degradation of the idea of *bhakti*. Originally, the belief that the Divine Being

¹ See above, p. 76 &c

demanding not ceremonial observances or deep thought, so much as the *heart* of his worshipper seemed a true and important gain to the religious consciousness. But as time went on the attempt to resolve all religion into emotion proved an absolute failure. Extravagance succeeded extravagance. The heroic legends of Vaishnavism gave place to the soft seducing tales of the sports of Krishna. Acts came to be held as indifferent. He who had *bhakti* could not sin, or else the mere utterance of the name of his god scattered to the winds a thousand crimes.

Along with this development of the idea of *bhakti* came the exaltation of the *guru* or religious teacher. We saw already how in earlier days the man of prayer—the Brahman—came to be raised above his fellows until the entire Brahminical race were considered gods on earth. In the sects—which professed to regard all true worshippers as equal—this glorification was reserved for the *guru*. Buddhism with its teachings about Buddhas and Bodhisattvas doubtless contributed to this tendency.¹

All later writings of the Vaishnava school dwell with great emphasis on the necessity of a *sadguru* or true guru. Thus

Without a *sadguru* you can obtain no good
First and foremost let *his* feet be embraced!

Again

Y *is* felt you god you must him call—
Your father in the all in all

Ja n i m. I so w th its *first* *is* a s a d I am w th t p ro ph et l ad
to btl an infl e i e. Of the effect of Christianity we have already
spoken

So say the Marathi poets, expressing the general opinion of their countrymen

The very gods are said to require gurus All classes of men, of course, then require them the men of no caste as well as those of the highest

It would seem as if, amidst the clashing of opinions, when sect was contending with sect, and the spirits of men were weary of endless doubt, the idea of a holy, true teacher as absolutely necessary, almost unavoidably arose in India, but in this case, as in so many others in the unhappy history of the Hindus, a conception radically true was pushed to an absurd and lamentable excess The homage paid to the guru ere long rose—chiefly but not solely, among the Vallabhacharyas

to deification Nay, the guru was even more important than the gods, for (so the logic ran) ‘if the deity is angry, the guru is our shelter, but if the guru is angry, we have no shelter’ Among many sects the guru is elected because of real or supposed merit, among the Vallabhacharyas and the followers of Chaitanya the position is hereditary, be personal qualifications what they may Expulsion from the order of gurus does not follow misconduct A wicked guru changes his place of residence, and seeks for new disciples

Finally, any man that chooses may become a guru He first attaches himself to some teacher, and, when he thinks himself qualified, he sets up on his own account It is true that in various books it is said that only a Brahman has the needful qualifications, but, practically, the rule is disregarded The lowest castes have their gurus as well as the highest, and

in my condensed men the lower classes who I
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The people of India when approached to require
 ed to admit that many of the missionaries
 whom they have heard to have been in the
 name of duty, but that the missionaries have been
 in the name of power. Still he came to the
 teacher and the child, whether a child or a
 friend or enemy, and gave face to the people
 of the Christian mission when he pointed to
 Christ, the one Being, in whose teaching
 character the highest of India is to be found.
 So far we have been more than completely satisfied

11 848 8 51 1

We have now to peruse the *Sūtra* or follower of *Sūtra*. The character of this deity never penetrated the mind of the people so deeply as that of Viṣṇu; there was little in the character or history of *Sūtra* that resembled either the heroic exploits of *Kṛṣṇa* or the seductive powers of *Kaṁbhya*. By the common people *Sūtra* was approached with feelings of awe, admiration or love without of the question. Remarkably enough, however, some of the greatest thinkers of India such as Śaṅkara, Aśvarya, were *Sūtras*. We may perhaps explain this by referring it to the dry abstract character of Śaṅkara's intellect, which must have been

repelled by the highly emotional nature of Vishnu-worship Sankara was a noted champion of the Vedanta philosophy, and vehemently maintained the dogma of non-duality His followers have added the teaching of the Yoga, and a very large number of them follow the revolting doctrines of the Tantras

It is one proof of the fluctuating character of sectarian divisions in India that we find the list of Saiva sects supplied by one of Sankara's disciples to differ very greatly from any enumeration that could be given in the present day¹ The most important of the latter are the following

1 The *Dandis*, or staff-bearers They are so called from their carrying a small stick, to which is attached a cloth dyed with red-ochre though this is not an exclusive mark of Saivas The Dandis, who worship Siva under the terrific form of Bhairava, have an incision made near the knee at their initiation—the blood so drawn being an acceptable offering to the deity The *Dasnamis* are a sub-section of the Dandis The term signifies 'the ten names', it is applied to the ten sections into which the regular followers of Sankara are divided

2 The *Yogis* These profess to follow the Yoga philosophy especially in its most ascetic precepts Among the most potent of the practices which the Yoga enjoins are continued suppressions of the breath, fixing the eyes on the tip of the nose, and various

¹ The Rev Baba Padmanji, who has carefully studied the forms of modern Hinduism, gives the following list of Saiva sects Dandi, dasnami, yogi, jangam, paramahans, rghori, urdhvabahu, akasmukhi, akhi, gudad, rukhad, sukhad, ukhad, kadalingi, sanmyasi, vairagi, avadhut, nag Even this long list is not exhaustive

postures amounting in all to eighty four. The *Kamphata* Yogis are so named because at the time of initiation their ears are bored and rings are inserted into the wound. They are perhaps the lowest and most ignorant of all. They are of any caste. They smear the body with ashes, they are fortune teller or quacks who profess to cure disease by incantations while many sing and play exhibiting monkeys and other animals.

3 The *Janamas*—otherwise called Lingayats or Lingayits—wear the linga or symbol of Śiva (*phallus*) on their persons generally in a box suspended by a string round their necks. They disregard caste and Brahmanical rites.

4 The *Paramahansas* profess to be wholly occupied with meditation on the Supreme Divinity. They go naked and pretend to be far above attending to any natural want.

5 The *Alghoris* are exceedingly disgusting in their habits. They will eat carrion or the vilest filth. For the bodily tortures to which they subject themselves they demand money. It is probable that formerly human sacrifice formed a part of their dreadful ritual.

6 The *Uddhabatus* hold an arm or in some cases both arms suspended above their heads until the member becomes quite stiff and will not bend. This is frequently done for a set time and then by friction and lubrication with oil the stiffened joint is restored to its former condition. Or the fist is closed and by and by the nails perforate the hand. But when the vow is performed they can be extracted.

7 The *Akṣamukhis* hold their face up to the sky until the muscles of the neck become rigid, and they retain the head in that position

But we must abandon the attempt to describe, or even enumerate, all the Saiva sects. They are multitudinous, they split and split, ramifying endlessly. The Vaishnava sects are more compact and massive. Saiva sects have usually run more than Vaishnava ones into fanatical asceticism. Exorcists, jugglers, charm-sellers, mountebanks of all sorts, are also generally devotees of Siva. The authorities in India have, as a rule, tried to suppress their more indecent and inhuman exhibitions.¹

III REFORMING SECTS

We have seen into what deplorable extravagance the Hindu sects have generally run. It was to be expected that men of purer minds and higher aspirations would from time to time appear, and strive to purify religion from beliefs and practices manifestly opposed to the dictates of conscience and right reason. We may call Buddha the first great Indian reformer.

¹ There are certain terms which are applied to religious mendicants somewhat loosely—such as *Sannyāsi*, *Vairāgi* (or *Byrāgce*, as it is often spelled), *Gosain*, or, more exactly, *Gosai*. Properly, however, the term *Sannyāsi* is a Saiva ascetic: the name denotes one who practises *sannyas*, or renunciation of the world. A *Vairāgi* is, properly, a follower of Vishnu, the name denotes one who has become free from passion. *Gosai* is, properly, *Go-saiṁ*, or 'lord of the cow'—a name of Krishna, so that it ought to denote a devotee of that god, but the name in popular usage is not always so restricted. The term *Fakir* is rightly applied only to Mohammedan mendicants. It properly signifies 'poor'.

We must indeed, speak with caution regarding his teachings for none of his writings— if such there ever were—have survived. Buddhism originally seems to have contained no theology but the morality which it inculcated was evidently pure.

When Islam first appeared in India as a victorious intolerant and proselytizing system it compelled attention. It might be listed but it could not be ignored. But even before the time of the great conqueror Mahmud of Ghazni, about the year 1000 the influence of Arabian thought was felt on the coast of Malabar in South India and in the great religious movements which occurred in the south from the ninth to the twelfth century it appears to enter as a factor of some importance. The Arab merchants who visited the pepper coast were often fired with missionary zeal.

But the influence of Islam was still greater in the north. We find unquestionable traces of it in the teachings of the celebrated Kabir. Kabir is usually said to have been one of the twelve disciples of Raminandra of whom we have spoken above. But if he was really such he departed widely from the doctrines of his master. Many verses still extant and popular are said to be of his composition but they probably were the production of his disciples. He flourished about the year 1400—four centuries after Islam had appeared in Northern India and when multitudes of Hindus must have been familiar with its vehemently iconoclastic character. Kabir has been claimed by the Musalmans as one of themselves, and Hindu writers have sometimes coincided

with them in the opinion¹. He had doubtless come much in contact with Mohammedanism, and had recognized its superiority in many respects to Hinduism. The unity of God, as earnestly proclaimed by Islam, must have strongly impressed him, but he was never able to get rid of Hindu conceptions regarding the illusory character of the world, transmigration, the avataas, and several other points. He inculcates devotion to the guru as earnestly as any teacher, but he holds that all claims to guruship should, in the first instance, be carefully tested. In many respects Kabirism departs widely from Hinduism. It rejects caste, denounces Brahminical arrogance and hypocrisy, and ridicules the Sastras. Idolatry is sinful. The temple is only a place for men to pray in. Renunciation of the world and contemplation are enjoined. The system runs easily into quietism and mysticism. One noble characteristic of it is the inculcation of moral purity, while of ceremonial purity and outward forms of worship it takes little or no account. It looks on life as almost sacred, and inculcates universal kindness—in this respect reminding us of Buddhism. The worst point in Kabirism is that the disciples are recommended to conform outwardly to the usages of tribe or caste, and they will even profess to worship deities whom in their hearts they scorn. Kabirism is not the stuff of which martyrs are made—it is gentle, yielding, and lacks the stronger virtues. Such

¹ Thus Mahipati, a Marathi poet, or rather chronicler calls him 'a Yavana devotee' (Yavana means a Greek, a Greco-Bactrian, or, in later writings, a Musalman.)

as it is it has spread widely over Northern Western and Central India and it has considerably affected the later developments of Hindu thought. The followers of this teacher are called Kabir Panthis.

A second reformer who in many respects resembled Kabir was Nanak. He was born near Lahore in 1469 and died in 1539. He had been deeply impressed by Mohammedanism but rejecting the Koran as well as the Hindu Sastras he produced a new Sutra written in the Panjabi language and called the *Grantha* (book). Caste as a civil institution was retained. The object of Nanak evidently was to effect a compromise between Islam and Hinduism but the iron of the former does not readily combine with the clay of the latter. Even in the fundamental question of the nature of Deity there is a gulf between them which it is impossible to bridge over. The sacred book—the *Granth*—which was to supersede all others is a poor production in so far as it is comprehensible it is pantheistic much more than monotheistic. The doctrine of *bhakti* is strongly inculcated as well as absolute devotion to the guru. Morality however is not lost sight of.

It is probable that the Silhs (literally disciples) as the followers of Nanak are called would have had a history similar to that of the followers of Kabir had it not been for persecution. Nanak himself was a mystic quietist and so were the first three of his successors. Arjunmall the fifth guru mingled in the political strifes of his age. His successor ^{also} did the same thing and the ninth of the series

as a rebel by the Emperor Aurangzib. This roused his son, Govind, to vehement opposition. He was a man of no small mental-power and immense practical energy. He simplified religion, reducing it pretty much to the adoration of one God and the practice of morality. But both the desire of vengeance and the example of the Mohammadans led him to add that the true faith must be protected and extended by the sword. Every true Sikh must be a soldier. The foolish Hindu he should not condescend to salute, a Musalman he was bound, if possible, to slay. The transformation of simple religionists into ardent warriors has been witnessed in other cases, but in no instance has the change been more complete or equally enduring. It has been maintained by the 'Book of the Tenth King' a second *Gianth*—which Govind added to that of Nanak.

With varying fortunes, yet on the whole gaining ground, the Sikhs fought on during the slow decline of the Moghul empire. In 1764 they formally assumed the position of an independent nation, and issued coin without the name of the Emperor of Delhi. Runjit Singh became virtually head of the community in 1805, and under his strong hand the power of the nation steadily increased. He died in 1839. Confusion followed. Wars with the British came in 1845-6 and in 1848-9, and the territory of the Sikhs was formally annexed to the British dominions in 1849. The Sikh

¹ The unity of nation is still large and important, but 'a Yavana active religious character seems slowly passing'.
later writings, 211 a revival is quite possible. Few of

none will become Mohammdans the vast body may slowly merge in the general mass of the Hindus. Some have lately shown a great respect for Christian doctrine and it is possible that this feeling may ere long issue in important movements.

There are various sects which although not nominally connected with Kabir have been greatly influenced by his tenets. The most important of these are Dadu Panthis¹ the Baba Lalis the Pranathis the Siva Narayans and the followers of Swami Narayan. Each of these systems embodied at the outset an earnest protest against idolatry and the moral corruption that clings to it but in the sects as in orthodox Hinduism there has always been a deplorable gravitation downwards.

Among reforming sects we may justly reckon the Vushnavas of the Maratha country. The Marathi literature is of considerable extent it is chiefly religious and revolves around the deity Viththal or Vithoba who is held to be a manifestation of Krishna. The great place of pilgrimage is Pandharpur—a town about seventy miles north east of Poona in the Deccan. A commentary on the Bhagavad Gita composed in Marathi verse by a learned Brahman towards the end of the thirteenth century has given a marked tinge to all later Marathi poetry, but the influence both of Buddhism and of Kabirism has also been very great. Indeed there

I formed a high opinion of the sincerity of a leader of the Dadu Panthis whom I met at Jypore in Pootana. He seemed to have far more sympathy with Christianity than with the gross idolatry around him. His religion appeared to be almost a pure theism. Dilu the founder flourished about 1600 A.D.

is great reason to hold that Pandharpur was originally a place of Buddhist pilgrimage. There is much vivacity in the writings of Namadeva, one of the more famous Marathi poets, and there is immense emotion in those of Tukaram, the most popular of all. The great object of the poets now mentioned is to exalt the glory of Vithoba, the glory of his dwelling-place, Pandharpur, and the glory of the river Bhima, on the south bank of which the town is built. Tukaram is perpetually breaking out in exclamations like this

‘ Much has been heard, much has been seen
Much has been said, of the glory of holy places,
But equal to Pandharpur no holy place exists—
No, not were even Vaikuntha to be revealed ’

Seeing that Vaikuntha is the heaven of Vishnu, the compliment to Pandharpur is pretty strongly put.

The idolatry of this sect is very decided none, indeed, more so. The image of Vithoba, standing on a brick with arms akimbo, is extolled in the most hyperbolical strains. A glance at that particular form sends a thrill of rapture through the votary's soul, though it is a repulsive image to ordinary eyes. No devotion (*bhakti*) could be more passionate than that of Tukaram, and when he cannot ‘meet’ the deity he is utterly heartbroken. All this is sad enough when we see it in one who really appears to be seeking after God. But the ground on which we have classed the worshippers of Vithoba among reforming sects is that the morality which they inculcate is almost always pure, and generally very decidedly so. There are, indeed, a few unhappy

passages in which Tularam speaks with applause of the lascivious sport of Krishna with the Gopis¹ but as a rule the morality which the Marathi poets uphold is as high as that of Kabir or of Buddha.

The history of Tularam is partly given in his own writings but more fully in the works of Mahipati a Brahman who wrote towards the end of last century. Tularam lived in the days of the distinguished chieftain Sivaji rather more than 200 years ago. By the time that Mahipati wrote the compositions of the poet were well known but his history had become to a great extent mixed with fable. Many marvellous acts are ascribed to him but the most remarkable thing in the legend is his supposed ascension into heaven with his body and without dying. Every year there is a great celebration of the wonderful event. Now there is nothing else resembling this in Hindu mythology. One thing alone makes the slightest approach to it viz the journey which the Pandava warriors with their wife Drupadi accomplished up by the Himalaya mountains into the heaven of Indra. But that was a long laborious ascent in which the whole party sank under the terrible fatigue except the eldest brother and the dog. Tularam, on the contrary is said to have ascended triumphantly in a blazing chariot. There is documentary evidence that on a certain day the poet went on a pilgrimage and that from this pilgrimage he never returned. The marvellous legend then is explained. We have often pressed

¹ He speaks of their *Harja Hanyajal/itar*—i.e. the blessed adultes.

the Vaishnavas in Maharashtra with the fact that there is no similar story told of any other saint or poet, and that, for example, Jñanesvar¹ whom they acknowledge to have been a greater man than Tukaram lies in his grave at Alandi, as he has done for nearly six hundred years. We may probably trace the legend to the influence of Christian missionaries. From the beginning of the sixteenth century Goa under the Portuguese—was a centre of missionary activity, and there were stations at several places in the Maratha country. Even Tukaram must have heard of the wonderful race of foreigners and of their great achievements under such warriors as De Castro and Albuquerque. Then, religious discussions of an animated kind took place at the court of the Emperor Akbar, and in these, Portuguese missionaries had an important share. Finally, though there was no translation of the Christian Bible into Marathi, there was a Christian Purana—a work actually called a Purana written in a dialect perfectly intelligible to the middle and lower classes of Maharashtra. That work embodies a great number of legends, as well as Biblical narratives given in a quaint, exaggerated form. That the poet himself may thus have become, to some extent, acquainted with the facts and teachings of the Bible is by no means improbable, but we cannot affirm it to be actually proved. But the case of Mahipati, the biographer, is considerably different. He lived, as we have seen, long after the poet, and when a halo had already gathered round him. That Mahipati

¹ This is pronounced by the Marathas as *Dnyanesvar*.

could have been ignorant of the more striking Biblical narratives is barely possible. The desire which we ascribe to him to exalt TUKURAM as a world teacher (so he calls him) and a great miracle worker would imply but a repetition in very similar circumstances of the famous attempt made by Philostratus in the third century to magnify Apollonius of Tyana into a form of surpassing grandeur capable of rivalling or eclipsing that of Jesus Christ.

A vast amount of legendary lore exists among all the Vaishnava sects respecting the intercourse which Vishnu in some of his manifestations has sought to hold with his faithful worshippers. These legends are embodied chiefly in the *Bhakta Mala* a work written in a dialect of Hindi by Nabhaji and this book has profoundly impressed the popular mind wherever the Hindi language is known. Mahipati of whom we have already spoken has imitated these narratives in simple Marathi verse and this has given them additional currency. The great subject of them is the efficacy—the omnipotence—of devotion to Vishnu. The deity is represented as supremely gracious supremely condescending: he visits and assists his true worshippers even when they are engaged in the lowest and most despised of occupations and he enables them to perform the most astonishing exploits. Here for example is a noble utterance—

Twixt the low and lofty he no difference knoweth
Still to faith he showeth

All his glory

But the poet cannot free himself from the character

istic tendency of the Hindu mind to run to extreme, and when he has got hold of a fine sentiment he speedily trails it in the dust. He tells us that the deity stooped even to gather cow-dung with Jani, to bear off dead cattle with Tsokha Mela (a work reserved for outcasts), and even to carry about flesh for a butcher and so on. Others affirm that, to reward the faith of one of his votaries who was a barber, the deity took his form and shaved the emperor in his stead. Worse than this puerility—Kabir, to entertain a company of devotees, repeatedly stole grain from a shopkeeper's store. On one occasion when he was so employed along with his son, the shopkeeper discovered the thieves, and the boy when making his way through the window, was caught by the feet. To prevent discovery, Kabir immediately cut off his son's head and carried it off. Next day the authorities impaled, and publicly exposed, the headless trunk. The devotees, on passing that way, asked for an explanation. The boy's mother told them all, and produced the head, whereupon they fixed it on again, and the boy was none the worse! Every specially holy man is certain to be represented as a simpleton all but a fool—in the Vaishnava works.

Such are the tales which, in the later days of Vaishnavism, have to a great extent supplanted the legends of the gallantry and gentleness of the conquering Rama and the wisely virtues of the much-suffering Sita.

CHAPTER XI

MODERN HINDUISM TEISTS AND FISTS

WE now proceed to speak of Modern Hinduism as a whole—to take a bird's eye view of the entire system. But it is by no means easy to convey a correct idea of anything so vast and complicated. The professed adherents of what is broadly called Hinduism are in excess of a hundred and ninety millions of human beings and in so great a number there must—in the nature of things—be immense diversities of belief and practice. We are all the more prepared to expect such diversities when we remember the history of Hinduism. When more than three thousand years ago the faith entered Northern India it found the land tenanted by various races who professed beliefs probably various in character and certainly very different from Hinduism. The intrusive Aryans conquered the aborigines but did not exterminate them and the victorious race mingled its blood to a large extent with that of the vanquished. In like manner if not to the same extent the religions mingled. Original Hinduism would in any case have sustained continued change and development from within but the alteration was greatly accelerated by the operation of causes acting from

without, and especially by contact with other creeds. We might well compare Hinduism to that remarkable effusion of volcanic matter which overspread, at a remote time, many hundreds of miles of the Deccan, entirely covering the sedimentary strata in many places, turning them into metamorphic rocks in others, and not unfrequently allowing them to crop up almost unchanged in character.

What is Hinduism at this day? As to *belief*, it includes a quasi-monotheism, pantheism, polytheism, polydemonism, and atheism, or at least agnosticism.

As to *worship*, it includes meditation on Brahman, the One, the All, without external rites or mental homage, image-worship, fetish-worship, ghost-worship, and demon-worship.

But again, a man may be a good Hindu who avows no belief at all, provided he pays respect to Brahmans, does no injury to cows, and observes with scrupulous care the rules and customs of his caste. It has been said that all duty is, to the Hindu, summed up in obedience to the regulations of caste, morality, religion, philanthropy, patriotism, everything. With regard to the other things we have mentioned, it is a very notable historical fact that, when Sivaji, the founder of the Maratha empire, roused his countrymen against their Mohammadan oppressors, he did not summon them to contend for 'altar and hearth'—*pro aris et focus*, he called them to hasten to the rescue of 'Brahmans and cows'. Aye, the shrewd Maratha knew the men he dealt with, and the summons met with an enthusiastic response.

When we first look round us in India we are deeply impressed with the amazing number of its idols. Images everywhere—in temples and out of them in the fields by the wayside in the houses rude figures of stone each bright and glaring with red paint—trees or rocks marked with the same substance. But here is a Maratha village let us go and note the worship. Outside is a circle of stones all marked as divine by red or white colouring matter—a remnant doubtless of the original village faith. Next near the gate is a small shrine of Hanuman or Maruti—the figure that of a black faced monkey with his tail conspicuously flourishing round his head he is the special guardian of the village. This deity too is probably aboriginal the strange ways and half human appearance of the monkey (the forest man as they called him) must have surprised and awed the settlers and when they took up their abode in or near the woods which he appeared to challenge as his own they deprecated his displeasure and tried to secure his favour. Gradually he came to be regarded as a mighty warrior and an incarnate divinity and hence around the temples of Rama particularly crowds of monkeys gather and are all held to be sacred.

We now pass into the village. Here is a respectable looking Brahman sitting or it may be swinging on a cot in the verandah of his clean and pleasant looking house. We address him with the respect we feel and with some little delay he returns the salutation. We find on inquiry that he is conning not being profoundly versed in Sanskrit.

the Vivek Sindhu a metrical work in Marathi by Mukundraj, which is probably the oldest book in the language. It inculcates the most absolute monism,—there is but one thing in the universe—and, as Mukundraj phrases it—‘Doer, doing, and deed are all identical.’ We politely ask the Brahman if he understands that proposition. He says he does. ‘Do you believe it?’ He answers, ‘Yes.’ He declares himself an out-and-out Vedantist—he holds there is but one thing real, and that is Brahman, and he knows enough of Sanskrit to say, *Aham Brahma*—‘I am Brahman.’ Such men are difficult to argue with—but we would fain inject a feeling into his conscience, and we ask, ‘How does your philosophy deal with the great fact of sin?’ He quickly retorts, ‘What is sin, and what is righteousness? They are illusions, both of them, not real existences.’ We explain a very different view of the question, but seem to make no impression. We part as friends, he telling us at the end that both views are correct—his theory is true to him, and our theory to us.

We go farther, and meet a company of people who have just returned from a pilgrimage to Pandharpur, and are holding a recitation. The party consists of men and women—mostly of the middle ranks, but with one or two Brahmans. They are in the court attached to the shrine of Vithoba. There is a leader in the centre of a company of about sixteen people. He has begun to speak, he holds the sweet, feebly-tinkling *vina* in his hands, he is full of Marathi poetry, he is telling a story about the Princess Mnabai and her supreme devotion

to Krishna and how when in uttermost distress she fled for refuge to him the image of Krishna opened received the royal votress within it and then closed upon her—the god thus taking her into perfect union with himself. Every time that he quotes a line of verse he chants it the assistants immediately catch it up and repeat it with a loud clashing of the cymbals which every man holds in his hands. The men are dancing with excitement and the leader is so carried away that the tears are streaming down his cheeks. This is an exhibition of *bhakti*, or devotion of which we have had occasion to speak already. It is wonderfully catching the audience follows every word and loud shouts are heard from time to time of Victory victory to Viththal! (or Vithoba). Well there is food for reflection here. The idolatry is deplorable, the legends are most wild and fantastic but one seems to see in the devotees a sense of human need a craving for Divine support and also an assurance that help is given to true worshippers. This is surely better than the cold heaven daring pantheism of the Brahman we first spoke to. These men will admit the great fact of sin though when we ask how it is to be removed they unhesitatingly reply

By devotion by gazing on the form of Vithoba and bathing in the river Bhima. They, however listen respectfully to a friendly statement of the True Atonement.

We pass on and here—is it outside or inside the mouldering village wall?¹—is a small shrine with

¹ Al no t every vill e is the Deccan i a roundel by wall the vill e rt generally mul. In the troublou t mes that i e ecc l the rise

a hideous image, gleaming with the unfailing red lead. What is this? This is Vetāl, a devil, a veritable fiend, and worshipped as such. In the far south of India, among the Shanais and other aboriginal races, a small white pyramidal structure that serves both for demon and temple is exceedingly common, but it is rather startling to find demon-worship in a village which is largely Brahmanical.

But it is time to speak of the men who have religious functions to perform in the village. They are two at least, even in the smaller villages. First comes the Bhat, or Brahman priest. He performs the marriage ceremonies, names the children, casts nativities, points out lucky and unlucky days, fixes the proper time to sow and reap, and when the corn is threshed, performs the needful *pūja* or worship to it. He also reads the sacred texts over the dead. The bhat is employed in connexion with almost every undertaking, for there is always some omen to be explained, or some ceremony to be performed. He is generally well off. He has, at any rate, his regular allowance, which is generally paid in kind. Then, every religious ceremony requires an additional fee. For a poor person it may be as low as a piece of a cocoa-nut, but it is considerable in the case of a rich man. In the month of Bhādiapad, before taking food every devout Kunbi (cultivator) should perform the ceremony of *tirth*, that is to say, every one ought to visit a sacred stream

of British power, the walls were needed as a defence. Now every monsoon washes away part of the mud entrenchment. No need of repairing them under the *par Britannia*.

and wash his sins away. But no stream of *aci* now
 ledged sanctity may be within easy reach and
 there is a more accessible mode of purification.
 He has only to drink a little of the water in which
 the *bhat* has dipped the great toe of his right foot
 and the thing is done. For saith the sacred text—

All the holy streams of the world go to the ocean

All the holy streams in the ocean are in the Brahman's right foot

(The logic seems to lump unless all that is in the
 foot be collected in the toe.)

In the same month also is the ceremony of *pitr*
paksh when offerings must be made to the souls
 of ancestors. These are represented by Brahman
 and *they* must be fed. If only one can be received
 that one must be the *bhat* but generally there are
 several Brahman—possibly ten or twelve—all of
 whom must be fittingly entertained.¹

The next religious functionary is the *Gurava*—the
 officiating priest at the village temple. If there are
 several temples he attaches himself to the most
 important and volunteers are ready to attend the
 others. The work of the *gurava* is to wash the idol
 every morning by pouring water over it to put red
 pigment composed of sandal wood and oil on its
 forehead to ornament it with flowers and strew flowers
 around it. He sweeps the temple cleans it by
 smearing the floor over with cow dung once in seven
 or eight days and lights a lamp or it may be several

The sacred men generally get fat at this season. So in the Decem-
 ber the *proerb* runs: A lamp is a pony in the month of *Sravan* or *Chhat*
Bhadrapal. (In the month of *Sravan* there is plenty of green grass
 for the pony.)

lamps, before the idol every night. On occasions of feasting, the *guiava* also prepares the dishes—i.e. leaves cunningly joined together off which the Hindus eat their food. He is generally also a musician, and plays on the *mridang*, or small drum, both at marriages and when there is a religious recitation at the temple. This functionary is not so generously supported as the *bhat*, but every family in the village will give him almost daily a small quantity of meal. He offers it to the gods after making it into cakes, and then takes it home to his own family. He has also generally some land. His office is hereditary, like that of the *bhat*. He is a man of respectable caste—higher than a *Sudia*, and he wears a sacred string. In addition to the worship usually performed by the *guiava*, the image is often visited by other residents of the village, particularly *Brahmans*. On such occasions some water is poured over the image and prayers are made to it.

There is also in all respectable houses an apartment called the gods' house—a chapel, we may term it—in which the images of the family are kept, ranged for the most part on a shrine in rows. There is almost always a special family idol, a tutelary god or goddess, which has probably been worshipped in the house for generations. In the morning a priest comes, enters the chapel, takes down the deities, bathes them in a pail of water, takes them out, dries them well, sets them again in their places, anoints them with red pigment, offers certain prayers, and, when the worship is over, receives a small fee for his trouble. Or this homage may be paid by the eldest

son of the family. The male members of the family then separately pray for a longer or shorter time to the deities. The women and young children will generally throw a few flowers on or near the images or place some fruits before them. And this is family worship in India.¹

Idols are made of various materials—such as gold silver copper brass stone clay and occasionally wood. Stone is the material most frequently used. Pictures are also drawn on the walls or on paper which is hung up and these pictures are worshipped as readily as other images.

Our readers are probably already inquiring what is the Hindu ideal of an idol. Is it a deity *per se* or is it only the resemblance of a deity? In other words is it a fetish or an image in the strict sense of the term? Before answering the question we require a careful definition of terms.

We understand by a fetish an object which is regarded as being *per se* a divinity. It is something visible and tangible which is charged with supernatural power—one might say as a Leyden jar is charged with electricity.

An idol on the other hand is properly an εἰδωλον an *imago*—a resemblance a likeness or at all events a symbol—of a being distinct from itself.

In theory fetishism and idolatry are thus quite distinguishable. But in practice idolatry very easily runs—certainly in India and probably everywhere—into fetishism.

An intelligent Hindu when asked why he worships idols will generally answer that he does *not* worship

idols, he worships the spiritual being who is in the idol. Properly speaking, there is a religious ceremony by which life is communicated to the image, and it is only after this that it can be rightly worshipped. The image now is living. It eats or drinks the offerings made to it, smells the odour of the flowers, sleeps, wakes, sometimes speaks, and can move from one place to another.¹

All this is clearly fetishism. The idol is no longer a mere symbol, it is itself a god. The 'life,' which by one ceremony has been brought into it, can by another ceremony be taken out, but unless that is done, the image is an independent deity. And thus images of the same deity may possess very different powers. We have seen the image of a god carried in procession to pay a visit of high ceremony to another image of the same god, like a friend visiting a friend. But the fetishism of India goes much farther than this. Any object whatsoever, if of very remarkable appearance, is sure to be worshipped. It will probably be marked with a red pigment to indicate its supernatural character. Any shape, if not easily explained, any object strikingly beautiful or strikingly the reverse, is marked and worshipped. There was fetishism in ancient Vedic days, but

¹ Avali, one of Tukaram's two wives, had no faith in Vitthoba to whom her husband was passionately devoted. On being told that the image drank milk when offered, she said, 'I will put that to the test.' So she made some milk 'hissing hot,' put it in a vessel and held it to Vitthoba's lips. The poor god was burnt, he turned his face to one side, and lo! a blister appeared on his lip. And if any person doubts the truth of the story, why, let him go to Dehm, Tukaram's village, and there to this day he will see the image with the wry neck. 'Seeing is believing,' says the Hindu devotee.

evidently it has increased in the lapse of ages and it often appears in as gross a form in India as among the lowest savages of Africa or Polynesia. Soon around the object that has attracted homage by its singularity there collects a mass of legendary lore. The strange position or fantastic shape is due to some god or other who visited the spot and the low fetish thus gradually obtains a place in the orthodox Hindu system. There is nothing it comes in contact with which Hinduism cannot absorb and partially assimilate and thus the stupendous pantheon becomes every day more stupendous still.

It is wholly impossible to enumerate all the objects worshipped in India. It is not easy even to classify them.

We may first mention the sun moon and stars of heaven. Next may come certain human beings especially Brahmans. But any very extraordinary man even if not a Hindu may be recognized as a descent or incarnation of a divinity—as happened in the well known case of General Nicholson. Among animals the cow is pre eminently a goddess. Monkeys peacocks serpents tortoises are also worshipped. So is the wild boar as a representative of the Boar Avatara—but we have also seen the animal hunted killed and eaten whereas the domestic swine is held by Hindus in almost as much horror as by Moham madans. Again certain animals are vehicles of certain gods and so become *quasi* divine—as for instance the bull of Siva and the rat of Ganesa.

In the vegetable kingdom the *tulasi* (holy basil) may be said to stand pre eminent. The *pipal* (*Ficus religiosa*) is also worshipped its leaves quiver like

those of the aspen, and thus indicate who is in the
a divinity or divinities¹. The banyan, too, is sacred,
probably on account of its remarkable mode of growth—

‘a pillared shade,
High overarched, and echoing walks beneath
the flowers,
move from
drinks the
the flowers,

But there are at least six or seven others which are hardly less divine, as, for example, the asoka², the kusa grass, the custard apple, and the

Of the productions of the natural world, the one most frequently worshipped is the salagram—a small black stone, with markings like those of the ammonite

which is found in various rivers. This is more than a mere symbol, Tukaram calls it ‘Vishnu’s self’. Nearly every deity has some object especially dear to him, and therefore sacred—some tree, or herb, or stone. The objects that are, or may be, worshipped are thus, as we have said, altogether countless.

We may indeed affirm that the Hindus will worship anything and everything *except* the Supreme Being³. A maxim which one hears every day in India is this—*Where faith is, there is God*. Believe a thing to be divine, and it is divine. Thus, a swine is regarded as utterly unclean, yet we have often asked this question, ‘If a man believed a swine to be a god, would it be so?’ and the answer, perhaps somewhat slowly given, has been, ‘Yes, if a man really believes

¹ Bishop Heber speaks of ‘the peepul’s haunted shade’.

² ‘Best of trees the asoka, blooming, in the forest she espied,
Gemmed all o’er with glittering blossoms, vocal with the song
of birds’—Kalidasa, *Raghuvansa*, bk. 1.

Bossuet has somewhere said of classical antiquity—‘Tout est Dieu, excepté Dieu lui-même’.

it the swine is a god And we have gone on to ask would his faith in that case save him? and the answer has been Most certainly

So much for the immensity of Indian idol worship Put with regard to the non existence of the worship of the Supreme We have frequently asked Where is the temple of the Supreme? and the answer given with evident surprise at a question so unexpected has always been Temple of the Supreme? What do you mean? there is no such temple 'Why? Because He can have none He is formless nameless in conceivable and we cannot worship Him And therefore you worship idols? Certainly An idol is indispensable We need some visible object on which our minds can rest

At a first glance India thus appears to be utterly infinitely exclusively polytheistic But on entering into conversation even with the simple villagers you are startled by the discovery that another system of thought which at first seems wholly irreconcilable with polytheism has been wrought into the very texture of the Hindu mind We mean pantheism Polytheism and pantheism are the warp and woof of Hinduism We have asked a hundred times Who is it that speaks in you and me? and the answer has always been The Supreme The commonest man will say that his soul is a part of God He will even reason with you and ask whether the Supreme is not omnipresent and when you answer Yes he will say that the case is therefore clear for the Divine Spirit which is in man necessarily excludes every other spirit The soul is a part of God

The pantheism which has extended so widely, and sunk so deeply into the popular mind, is not indeed the sublimated system of the Vedanta. We saw above that the Vedanta denies the reality of an external world, and affirms the existence of one Self, one sole Spirit, in the universe, or rather, there is no universe

nothing but the one Self and its illusions. But the popular pantheism allows the existence of matter. The Puranas speak of matter as the body of God—the mountains being His bones, and rocks His nails, the trees His hair, and so on. The common people seldom do this, they believe in their own bodies, though not in their own souls. But, in truth, all is inconsistency. Even Tukaram, who at one time contends earnestly for the doctrine of *dvaita*, or dualism, at another declares that his soul has blended with Deity, as salt dissolved in water is blended with the water.

No characteristic of any religion can be more important than the manner in which it deals with the great fact of Sin. Many a Brahman will assert that he holds sin to be a mere appearance, an illusion, and this is in accordance with Vedanta doctrine. Yet the same man will go through a round of ceremonies every morning and evening, and confess that he is a sinner from his birth. The common Hindu will not go to the extreme of asserting the non-reality of sin, though he is wholly unable to explain how the Divine Spirit, which dwells in him instead of a soul, is led into the commission of evil. He is therefore quite consistent in using means for the removal of sin.

We may glance at the teaching of Hinduism regarding heaven and hell. In earlier Vedic days

Yama the first man was placed in heaven. He there gathers his descendants—the Pitris or Fathers—around him to the sound of music. With them he quaffs the Soma draught and with them he also comes to join the gods who are seated on the Kuska grass in the place of worship and he there partakes with them of the libation. There is little or no reference to hell at first. I re long in the Atharva Veda hints are given about dismal pits in which the wicked are confined but no detailed statement is made regarding the pains inflicted. Annihilation is sometimes threatened. At a later time arose the doctrine of transmigration. We might have expected that heaven and hell would in consequence fade out of sight inasmuch as both good and evil deeds receive their due reward in the present life. Not so however. The worshippers of Indra and several other gods are translated at death to Svarga those of Vishnu to Vukuntha those of Shiva to Kailasa and so on. The enjoyments are sensuous even sensual sometimes immoral.

Very remarkable is the transformation which Yama gradually undergoes. He finally becomes the ruler of hell or rather of the hells for they are very many. The later Hindu writings give fearful descriptions of these.

Of course all these heavens and hells are transitory. The hells are purgatories in which

L'erecentur poenis veterumque malorum
Supplici expendant

But when we speak of sin we need to explain what the Hindu conception of sin actually is. We referred

Virgil *Aeneid* v. 139. Virgil says that the soul after drinking the water of Lethe return to occupy new bodies.

already to the declaration of Professor Weber that in the Vedas the religious notion of sin is altogether wanting, and various writers of note have used equally strong language in regard to the Greek and Roman writings. But surely there was what we may call a vacillating sense of sin in Greece and Rome, and there is as much among the Hindus now. St Paul declares that 'God has never left Himself without witness' and that 'the Gentiles show the work of the law written on their hearts'. Not universally, for, in some cases, conscience appears, to quote St Paul again, 'to be scared with a hot iron,' familiarity with evil has in many destroyed the moral perceptions and emotions. Yet all the Hindus are not such. Conscience, alas! is frequently asleep, often drugged with opiates, but it is not dead, and it is generally capable of being roused. Undoubtedly the ordinary Hindu sees that there is a distinction between right and wrong, he fully admits also that he is bound to do the right and shun the wrong, although he is often sorely astray as to what is right and what is wrong. We therefore do not contend that 'the religious notion of sin is altogether wanting'. The man will at once concede that he ought to worship God, and that he sins unless he does so. He will at once admit that he ought not to injure his neighbour, and that stealing, lying, adultery, and such-like deeds, are sins which Heaven will punish. Yet when all this is said, how much is left unsaid! One deplorable and fundamental error into which Hindu teachers have fallen is that they have inculcated an endless number of ceremonial observances and rules of caste as of equal importance

with the clearest moral duties—many, in many cases as of greater importance. Conscience has thus been bewildered. Although from time to time there has come in some quarter or other a reaction from extreme ceremonialism and the fundamental truths of morality have been recognized and raised again almost to their proper place the happy change has been but temporary.

The ancient sages whose questionings and aspirations are contained in the Upanishads paid comparatively little attention to external rites. Meditation on the Divine constituted to them nearly the whole of religion. Salvation was attainable only through knowledge. Further the important school of thought which exalts devotion (*bhakti*) makes in theory at least equally little account of ceremonies. Devotion is all in all and through devotion salvation is obtained. Still viewed as a whole Hinduism strikes every observer as a most colossal system of outward rites and ceremonies. One stands in blank amazement to see human beings willingly bending their necks and bearing a yoke so crushing. Salvation by works—that is by ceremonies and penances—is the doctrine held by an overwhelming majority of the people.

The means of deliverance from sin and of acquiring righteousness are very numerous. The following are the most efficacious and customary.

- 1 Pilgrimages to holy places washing in a sacred stream and beholding a deity
- 2 Giving food or money to Brahmans
- 3 Frequent repetition of the name of a deity
- 4 Bodily austerities
- 5 Eating the five products of the cow

Pilgrimages were not known in Vedic days, no one spot was deemed more sacred than another. Rivers, indeed, soon began to be held in reverence, and this doubtless on account of their manifest and manifold utility, and it was the holiness of the river that made the town on its banks holy. First the Indus, 'the most copious of streams,' as the Vedas call it, attracted admiration, then, as the race moved on, came the Sarasvatī but both of these were afterwards eclipsed by the Ganges. We trace the idea of sacred places from about 200 B.C. It has gradually attained immense development, and is still developing. India is covered with holy places, or *tin thas*, they are found from the lake Manasa in Tibet to Ramesvarī, over against Ceylon, from Dwarka in the west to Puri in the east. Benares, on the Ganges, still holds the high place it attained in early, though not the earliest, days. All the territory around, within a radius of ten miles, is equally holy. Next come in importance Prayag (Allahabad), at the confluence of the Ganges and Yamuna (Jumna), Haridwar (also written Haidwar)¹, at the point where the Ganges breaks out into the plains from among the mountains, and Ganga Sagar, where the Ganges joins the ocean. These are very celebrated *tin thas*. Fully equal in importance to Benares is Puri, in Orissa, with its notorious temple of Jagannath (Juggernaut), the region around which for twenty miles is all holy. Dwarka, in Gujarat, said to have been the capital

¹ Haridwar means, the gate of Vishnu, Haidwar, the gate of Shiva. There have been most vehement disputes between the two sections of worshippers as to the true spelling, and the deity specially honoured there.

of Krishna is also famous. Nāsik on the Godavari is sacred as being associated with the history of Rama. Landharpur on the Bhima which is a tributary of the river Krishna has been at least four hundred years a centre of immense attraction to the Marathas. Kameswar situated on an island between India and Ceylon is visited by great multitudes from all parts of India and devotees carry vessels of water from the Ganges for the purpose of pouring it on the image. The last mentioned place contains one of twelve celebrated *lingas* or phallic symbols of Siva. Somnath in Gujrat. Omkar on an island in the river Narmada (Nerbudda). Badari Kedai near the source of the Ganges and Tryambak at the source of the Godavari are also among popular *tirthas*.

The numbers that frequent the *tirthas* differ in different places. Those on the Ganges are visited at certain recurring times by more than a million or occasionally two millions. The holy season extends over a considerable time—crowds coming and going daily. At Pandharpur there gather twice every year in July and December from a hundred thousand to a hundred and twenty five thousand. The attendance at Puri is also very great amounting sometimes to about three hundred thousand.

The ceremonies of purification differ somewhat in different places. Very generally at a *tirtha* there are men who call themselves *Gangaputras*—sons of the Ganges—whose duty it is to help the pilgrims in the performance of the customary rites. Every family of these has a book in which are marked down the names and residences of pilgrims who have in former

days visited the spot, and, on the arrival of any visitant, these men eagerly ask his name, turn over their records, and try to discover that he or his family having formerly availed themselves of their ministrations, he must do so now. They help the pilgrim to find a suitable place in which to pitch a tent or bit of cloth as a kind of shelter, take him to the temple, or temples, perform the ceremony of shaving his head¹—a matter of much importance in many places, and, above all, help him in the washing away of his sins by bathing. They stand beside him in the stream, repeating the appropriate prayers in Sanskrit. A price is paid, which varies according to the circumstances of the pilgrim or the importance of the priest.

The great prevalence of the system of pilgrimage is truly remarkable. One cannot look upon it with satisfaction. No doubt it relieves in some degree the dull monotony of every-day existence, it enables a man whose horizon has been bounded by his village to see a little of the outside world. But the evils accompanying it are exceedingly great. It is expensive. It makes a man neglect his daily work, which, in the case of the Indian cultivator, is a very serious matter. It makes the pilgrim run a serious risk as to health and even life. At all the great festivals wretched accommodation is certain, and an outbreak of disease is frequent². In the rainy season

¹ This is not performed everywhere. It obtains at Benares, Gaya, Nāsik, Pandharpur, &c. Women who are not widows cut off a portion of their hair.

² Until of late the Government of India did very little with a view to secure the simplest sanitary arrangements. The consequence was that

the dangers are aggravated. In Bengal husbands and fathers have often occasion to resist the attempts made by female members of their families to go on pilgrimage to Puri or elsewhere for when the caged bird escapes there is the danger of its never returning. It might desire this but birds of prey are ready to devour it. Men sent out from Puri traverse India proclaiming the glories of Jagannath and the blessedness of going on pilgrimage. They especially tempt widows and it is against the representations of such men that the heads of families require to be on their guard. Regarding the deplorably erroneous view of true religion which is fostered by the whole system of pilgrimage it is unnecessary to speak. It is a great corruption of the earlier and simpler faith of India. Finally it ought to be noticed that the mind of the pilgrims is much more set on making righteousness and acquiring merit than on being purified from sin. The idea of acquiring merit, righteousness is very deeply implanted in the mind of every Hindu and pilgrimages are among the most meritorious of works.¹

With regard to ascetic practices as a means of salvation they are far more general among the Saiva than among the Vaishnava sects. We have already spoken of asceticism when treating of the

1. A few days the sacred place and neighbourhood became utterly disgusting and the whole atmosphere poisoned. Latterly Government has interfered to some extent and when cholera has broken out has issued proclamations warning the people against attending the infected place.

On Puri and the observances connected with the worship of the lord of the world, consult Chaudhury Buchanan's *Christian Researches* and Sir W. W. Hunter's *Orissa*.

Yoga system and the Saiva sects. It would be almost as endless as useless a task to enumerate all the forms of self-torture. In addition to the practices mentioned on pp 152, &c, the most common are these: vows of silence, never lying down, lying on spikes, sitting between five fires (the sun blazing overhead being one), visiting a holy place—the more distant the better—by rolling towards it like a log, or measuring the ground by falling flat on the face, rising and lying down again farther on.

One of the most powerful means of purification is eating the five products of the cow. The cow being holy, everything that issues from her body is holy, even the dust raised by her feet will purify from sin¹. The fivefold mixture is called *pañchagavya*. Marvellous is its potency.

‘Piercing through my bones and marrow, dwelleth sin within my flesh,
But the *pañchagavya* burns it, as the fire consumes the wood’

Being not only potent, but easily accessible, this means of purification is more frequently had recourse to than any other. Sacred streams may be at some distance, but the cow is always at hand. A feast given to Brahmins generally accompanies the purifying rite, and is its suitable completion.

Regarding this practice, which will appear to our readers one of the most irrational of the innumerable observances of Hinduism, it may be well to note in conclusion that we see something very similar in the

¹ So Kalidasa—

‘Rising from her holy footsteps, lightly curled the dust around,
But it purified the monarch, like the *tirthas* sacred wave’

Raghuvansa, bl 1

Parsi ritual One of the products of the animal—we do not mean milk or butter—is greatly used as a means of purification among the professed followers of Zoroaster. It is applied to the body every day and a small quantity is drunk. There is indeed this difference between the Hindus and Parsis—it is the cow that is specially sacred to the former but it is a bull that the Parsis keep in their temples in order that the purifying liquid may never fail. It is with hesitation we write of such things but to omit a point so characteristic would be to give an imperfect account of these religions.

We may here mention the purifying rites¹ which must be performed by all Hindus who belong to the three highest castes. 1 A ceremony to cause conception. 2 On the first indication of vitality and to secure the birth of a male child. 3 At the time of birth. 4 At the time of naming the child. 5 On taking the child out to see the moon. 6 To see the sun. 7 On feeding it with rice especially in the fifth or eighth month. 8 The tonsure of the hair except one lock in the second or third year. 9 Investiture with the sacred string on the tenth or twelfth day after birth and 10 Marriage. These ceremonies amount to ten. Some authorities give two more—arranging the mother's hair in the fourth sixth or eighth month of pregnancy and the return of the young man to his home after completing his studies under a *guru*. Investiture with the sacred string takes place in the case of a Brahman in the eighth

¹They are called *sanskara*—i.e. perfecting completing. The word sacrament is generally rendered in Indian languages by *sanskara*.

year, in that of a Kshatriya in the eleventh, and in that of a Vaisya in the twelfth. The youth thus enters the honoured rank of the twice-born. In the case of a female the rites are much fewer.

The legislator Gautama enumerates forty sacraments or purificatory rites.

Ceremonies connected with the dead are regarded as of great importance. First come the funeral rites. The spirit of the deceased is understood to hover for some time after death over the place where the corpse is burned or buried. The spirit is unhappy, and in its nakedness impure, and all the relatives of the deceased are also impure. The funeral rites, which are celebrated after death for ten days, pacify the troubled spirit. Balls, generally made of rice and milk, along with water, are offered, and the spirit feeds on their essence. It acquires in this way a covering, or body, more substantial than the 'subtile body' which it possessed when it quitted the one of flesh and blood. The spirit is no longer a *picta*, or ghost, it is now exalted into a *pitr* (ancestor), and can be worshipped. Offerings are made to it, consisting as before of balls chiefly of rice and milk, and these are accompanied with the recitation of sacred texts. This ceremony is called *śrāddha*.¹

The prescriptions connected with the observances of the *śrāddhas* run into infinite complexity. A book which has lately appeared in Bombay contains on this single subject more than a hundred closely-printed pages. We will not weary our readers by going into details that are as meaningless as they are endless.

¹ Derived from the Sanskrit *śrāddha*, faith

Suffice it to say that there are daily offerings to the *pitris* offerings on particular days of the moon occasional offerings such as for a relative recently deceased or on domestic occurrences such as the birth of a son. These may all be called obligatory. There are also voluntary *sraddhas* which are performed for the acquisition of merit. The proper times for *sraddhas* are during the dark half of waning moon the day of new moon at the solstices eclipses &c.

It is interesting to note that in more ancient days as appears from the legislation of Manu offerings were made which have been discontinued in modern Hinduism. Thus Manu informs us that the *pitris* have their hunger satiated for two months by the offering of fish deer's flesh satisfies them for three sheep's flesh for four birds' flesh for five wild boar's for eleven cow's milk for twelve red goat's flesh for ever. Other specifications on this subject are no less precise.

It is the office of the nearest male relative to present the ball of food to the deceased and to his forefathers both in the male and female lines. He who does so establishes a claim to the inheritance.

It is the greatest of misfortunes that there should be no male descendant. In that case no one is qualified to present the *sraddha* and the *pitris* are reduced to the uttermost distress—so greatly are the dead dependent on the living¹. Adoption however remedies the evil an adopted son (if the statutory

1 Valmiki puts this conviction in a somewhat grotesque form. King Dilipa had no son wherefore he sorrowfully says—

Son must cease the holy *sraddha* and my fathers seeing this
Drink the water of the offering warming it with sighs of woe

Pañcamaṅga bk. 1

prescriptions have been exactly complied with) is fully qualified to present the necessary offerings to the *di manes*

We must still refer to caste. It is the stronghold of the religion, Dr Wilson of Bombay says it is 'the soul as well as the body of Hinduism'. In truth, a man may believe anything or nothing, and he may neglect other precepts of the faith as much as he chooses, yet, if he attend to the rules of caste, he remains a good Hindu. A tuft of hair on the crown of the head is, in most places, the great outward badge of his being so. But still more important is compliance with the prescribed rules¹ as to what he eats and drinks. A man is defiled by what goes into his mouth—especially by eating food prepared by a man of lower caste. Contact with such a man is also polluting.

The orthodox legislation, as we saw above, was one that highly exalted the Brahman, and sternly depressed the Sudras, and the still lower divisions of the people. Of course, under a Mohammadan or Christian government, the measureless pretensions of the Brahmans could not be conceded. For example, such precepts as these—'Never shall a king slay a Brahman, though convicted of all possible crimes¹,' 'Whatever exists in the universe is all the property of the Brahman²,' could be treated only with contempt. But, under purely Hindu rules, it is amazing to what extremes the Brahmans have insisted on the maintenance of the ancient rules. Thus, before Poona was taken from the Marathas by the British, no Mhar was

¹ Manu, viii 379, &c.

² Ibid 1 93-100

allowed to enter the city before nine o'clock or remain in it after three and this for the remarkable reason that before nine and after three he cast too long a shadow—and if his shadow fell on a Brahman it polluted him.

The kingdom of Travancore in Southern India is the part of the country in which Brahmanical ideas now rule most strongly. The Namburi Brahmans number only a little more than ten thousand but their will is law. A late Maharaja had received a good English education but either from choice or necessity he acted precisely like a bigoted Hindu. Various public improvements such as roads and bridges were urgently required but such things must wait for the Brahmans must be fed and receive largesses which the country can ill afford. Meanwhile certain classes which until the British Government interfered were in a condition of abject slavery are not allowed to enter courts of justice nor public markets nor to remain on the public road if a man of higher rank is using it. A Pulayar must remain sixty-nine steps away from a Brahman otherwise the latter is polluted and the former visited with condign punishment.

Thus the idea that some classes are inherently holy and others inherently polluted and abominable has taken complete possession of the mind of the higher castes in Travancore and those in the neighbouring region of Cochin. The fact may seem extraordinary seeing that in the Veda there is no trace or the least possible trace of caste. Yet we can see in the language used regarding the aborigines

—which breathes only passionate hatred or contempt how ready the Aryans were, even in early days, to trample their enemies in the dust. History is sorrowfully full of proofs of 'man's inhumanity to man', but it strikes us (not forgetting the case of the Helots of Sparta) that perhaps the most flagrant instance of high treason against the rights of man as man is seen in the legislation of Manu, and the practice of the 'orthodox' kingdom of Travancore¹

Any one who carefully notes the form of Hinduism around him will find it to differ considerably from the description given in books. He is apt, therefore, to think the books imperfect. But, in truth, to describe the innumerable beliefs and observances which are summed up under the exceedingly comprehensive term Hinduism would require a whole library of books. Every part of India has its peculiarities of faith and worship. It has been said that in the Konkan every village differs in its deities from every other. The student of Hinduism must *observe* as carefully as read, and so supplement what the study of his books has taught him.

Some writers draw a distinction between Brahmanism and Hinduism,—the former term designating the belief and practices of the highest caste, and the latter the system in vogue among the common people. The distinction is, so far, useful, but the two things have much in common. In this little work we have dealt chiefly with Brahmanism. The following remarks will bear on the popular belief

¹ The number of distinct castes in Travancore is said to be 420. The most degraded of the outcasts are the Pulayas.

and fasts which it prescribes. It is quite impossible to give even a brief description of the whole of these, and, were it possible, it would greatly try the patience of the reader. But a fairly correct idea of these observances may be obtained from a short statement regarding ten or twelve of the most important. We shall describe them especially as they are observed in Western India. We take them in their chronological sequence.

1 *Makar Sankranti*—corresponding to January 12. The celestial sign *makar* answers to Capricorn. On that day the sun is said to begin his journey northward. To the early Hindus, living in a cold region, the approach of spring was an occasion of the greatest joy, and the commencement of the sun's northward progress could not pass unmarked, for then opened the auspicious half of the year.¹

The sun especially is worshipped in this festival. Bathing in the sea is prescribed wherever it is possible. Rejoicings abound in public and private. Great gatherings take place, as at Prayag, where the Ganges and Jumna mingle, and at Ganga Sagai, where the Ganges meets the ocean.

In the Tamil country the festival is called 'Pongal'. Great attention is paid to the cattle. Their horns are painted and adorned with chaplets, and the poor, overworked beasts have, for once, a grand holiday.

2 *Mahasivaratri* i.e. the great night of Siva (February 12). The linga (*phallus*), which is the emblem of Siva, is especially worshipped on this

¹ According to correct astronomy the sun enters Capricorn and commences his northward journey on December 21.

occasion. A legend of great celebrity is connected with it. A wicked hunter to escape the wild beasts mounted at night into a *bel* (*bil a*) tree which is sacred to Siva. Leaves were broken off and fell on a linga that stood below. Moreover the hunter had fasted all day for the sufficient reason that he had nothing to eat. Siva was delighted at the honour paid him by the falling leaves and the fast and sent a heavenly chariot to convey the hunter to heaven. This event is commemorated in the festival. First there is a fast during the day. At night the worshippers repair to the temples of Siva and remain there from about eight o'clock till five next morning. Worship is performed for them by a priest on four different occasions and thus the vigil lasts the whole night. Generally the priest reads a list of Siva's many names and as each is mentioned the worshipper throws a leaf of *bel* on the linga.

3 *Holi*. This festival properly lasts ten days in the end of February and beginning of March. It is exceedingly popular in all parts of India. It corresponds in many respects to the ancient Saturnalia of which the modern Carnival seems a mild survival.

The most marked feature of the Holi is the extreme license with which it is attended. Red powders or red coloured liquids are thrown about people are sent on absurd errands (as on All Fools day in Europe), dances are kept up in commemoration of the sports of Krishna with the Gopis (the female cow herds of Vrindavana). Bonfires are kindled for the last three days. Matters get worse towards the end of the festival and on the last day

it is hardly possible for a respectable woman to leave her own house she is at once assailed with volleys of the vilest language conceivable. Legends had to be invented to justify, or at least explain, so disgusting a practice. We are told that a female demon who was injuring children had to be driven away by the use of such abominable words¹—and certainly they are enough to disgust even a demon. But there can be no doubt that originally this was a spring festival a season of universal rejoicing at the revived life of nature. It is very sad to see it celebrated, not with innocent gladness, but with obscene and riotous excess². When the bonfires at the conclusion are extinguished, the ashes are distributed, and people rub their bodies over with them.

4 *Rama navami*. This is commemorative of the warrior-god Rama. It ends on the ninth day of the light half of the month Chaitra, hence the term *navami*, which means 'ninth'. For eight days previous the temples of Rama are illuminated and largely attended, the history of Rama is read or recited, and the images of the god are arrayed with costly ornaments. The last day is the anniversary of the birth of the deity. At noon, when the birth is believed to have taken place, the preacher, as we may call him, who has been descanting on the greatness of Rama, exhibits a small image of the god, and puts it into a cradle. The assembly prostrates itself

¹ In the Bhavishyottara Purana, ch. xvii.

² It deserves to be noted that, in the Roman festival of Anna Perenna, which was also celebrated in spring, the same evil practice prevailed. As Ovid expresses it, '*post veteres obscenaeque dicta canuntur*'.

before it. Acclamation is all around. handfuls of red powder are flung, in token of joy and all for home exulting.

5. *Naga panchami*. This festival is held on the fifth day of the light half of the month Sravan. It is in honour of serpents. The figure of a serpent is made of clay or drawn on the wall and worshipped. Living serpents are brought and supplied with milk and eggs. All this is done to deprecate the wrath of the venomous reptile.

6. *Narali purnima*. This festival is observed chiefly by those who dwell on the coasts. It is held on August 23 when the more stormy period of the rainy season is believed to be over. Flowers and especially coconut nuts are thrown as offerings into the sea in order to secure its favour or else as a thank offering because its rage has abated.

7. *Krishna (or Gokul) Janmashtami* is celebrated on the eighth day of the dark half of Sravan in commemoration of the birth of Krishna. It is one of the greatest of the sacred seasons. The worshipper fasts the whole day—that is they can eat only certain kinds of food and uncooled. Boiled rice for example is prohibited. At night they bathe, worship a clay image of the infant Krishna and adorn it with leaves of the *tulasi* and flowers. Next day is a great occasion among all keepers of cattle as Krishna in his boyhood lived among such.

In Western India a deity probably aboriginal called Kanhoba has been identified with Krishna. The chief devotee on the night when Krishna is supposed to have been born becomes excited, uses

wild gestures, mutters strange sounds, his whole body quivering. This is a sign that 'the god has come'

i.e. he has entered the body of his worshipper. This man is now himself worshipped. Others become equally frantic, and are worshipped in their turn. Sick persons are brought, Kanhoba's devotees rub ashes on their heads, pass their hands over them, receive money, and dismiss them as healed.

8 *Ganesa chaturthi*, celebrated on the fourth of the light half of Bhadiapad (September 10), is in commemoration of Ganesa or Ganapati—'the remover of difficulties'—a god with an elephant's head. His vehicle is a rat, and therefore the clay image of a rat, saddled and bridled, is often placed beside him. The image of the god is gilded and glittering. The deity has to be brought into the image, which is done by elaborate consecration. It is then worshipped. The exploits of Ganesa are enlarged on, friends and relatives attending. A sumptuous feast is then given to Brahmans. The deity remains as an inmate of the house for several days, amounting in some cases to ten. Thereafter he must depart. First, the divinity which had been brought into the image is extracted by the repetition of appropriate formulae. The image is then seated in a palanquin, and carried to the sea or a tank in a gaily attired procession. It is flung into the water with the expression of much regret at parting and of hopes to meet next year.

Once Ganesa, when riding on his rat, had a fall, and the moon, who saw it, laughed at his equestrianship. Whereupon the offended god cursed the moon

and all who should look at her but he condescended afterwards to restrict the curse to those who should behold her on his birthday. Accordingly if any Hindu accidentally or forgetfully sees the luminary at that time, he becomes terribly afraid of the consequences which he probably seeks to avert by provoking some neighbour to pour on him a flood of maledictions. These are held to be a substitute for the curse he has incurred.

9 The *Dussera* properly *Dasahara* ending on the tenth of the light half of Asvin (October 16) seems to be connected with the autumnal equinox. It commemorates the victory of Durga the wife of Siva over a buffalo-headed demon. In Bengal it is called the Durga puja and is a very splendid festival. The clay image of the goddess highly bedizened is treated with much the same ceremonies as have been described in the case of Ganesa and after nine days worship is conveyed with immense pomp and flung into the river. An important part of the worship of Durga is bloody sacrifice. It is generally that of a kid. Durga is ten armed. Each hand bears some destructive weapon and she is represented as slaying a demon. This is the greatest festival in Bengal.

As it is believed that the warrior god Rama marched out on this day against Ravana the demon king of Ceylon the Marathas selected it as the proper time to begin the great plundering expeditions to which that warlike race was so much addicted. To this day the implements of war are worshipped. The bright flowers of the *palasa* (*Lutea frondosa*)

and other trees—which are held to represent gold are offered to the gods, and by friends to each other.

10 *Diwali* (from *dipavali*), 'the feast of lamps,' is celebrated on days corresponding to November 2, 4, and 5. The houses are cleaned, whitewashed, and illuminated. In front of the house a quadrangular space is marked with pretty figures, drawn with variously coloured kinds of chalk. This is done on most festivals, but especially at the Diwali. To draw the figures well is deemed a high accomplishment of the women. Gambling is permitted almost enjoined during the feast. Fireworks abound. The merchant closes his accounts, and gets new ledgers and account-books. These are consecrated and worshipped. It is the commencement of the Hindu year.

11 *Bali pratipada* is celebrated on the first day of the light half of Kārtik (November 6). The people clean their houses, bathe, fill baskets with the rags and rubbish lying about, and throw it out of the house. In the Maratha country they repeat the words given above in the note to p. 108.

12 *Champa shashti*, on the sixth of the light half of Mārgaśīrṣa (December 11), is sacred in Western India to the god Khandoba of Jijun, near Poona. This used to be a great occasion for men and women, in the performance of vows, being suspended by a hook run through the back and swung round in front of the temple. But this cruel practice has been forbidden by the British Government. The practice, however, was not abandoned in the Madras Presidency until very recently.

CHAPTER VII

RECONSTRUCTION

WE have thus endeavoured to trace the history of the Hindu religion from the commencement up to the present time—through a period amounting to more than three thousand years. It may be well to give a brief summary of the conclusions to which we have been led.

The foundation of the Hindu faith is laid in the Veda otherwise called the four Vedas. But from the facts which the Veda supplies we are able to draw some inferences regarding an earlier form of religion which we may designate pre Vedic. It can hardly be doubted that the Indo European race before it parted into five or six separate branches recognized the existence of a Supreme Divinity—a Being powerful wise and good. He was held to be the arranger (we cannot say the creator) and the ruler of all things. Offerings were a very important part in the worship of this Being and among these animal sacrifice held a high place. We can hardly suppose that the Supreme Divinity was the only Being to whom worship was paid yet we may well hesitate before we call the religion polytheistic¹. Idolatrous it almost certainly was not if images were used at all it could only have been very sparingly. The Supreme Divinity was in all probability a spiritual Being but localized

¹ Thus we do not tax the Roman Catholics with polytheism notwithstanding the invocation of saints and angels.

in heaven, and we may believe that, with many, Heaven and the God of heaven were conceptions separable, but in fact not always separated. Worship was, to a very large extent, domestic. We have little or no evidence of the existence of a priestly order.

It is evident that the Hindus and Iranians (old Persians) remained together for a considerable time after the other divisions of the race had migrated towards the West. Reverence for the fermented juice of the *Soma* plant (in Zend *Homa*) is very marked in the Veda and the Avesta, but it does not appear in Greek or Roman writings. It may have been of very early origin, in the tribes migrating to the West, it would cease when the holy plant was no longer visible, or it may have begun after the eastern tribes had parted from the western. It seems to have been offered to the divinity as being the most wonderful and precious beverage they knew.¹

We come now to the Vedic religion. The earliest hymns are 'racy of the soil', there is little, if any, remembrance of the time when the Aryans lived beyond the great mountains that form the northern battlement of India. The religious thought of the Vedic poets is deeply affected by their environment. Varuna, the god of heaven, is still a mighty being and possessed of high moral attributes, but a very different deity has begun to overshadow him. Indra, the god of the lower sky—the region of cloud and storm—is now spoken of as supreme, and the lofty, super-sensuous attributes of Varuna begin to pass out of view.

¹ In the parable of Jotham (Judges 10. 13) wine is said to 'cheer God and man'.

Deities multiply, yet slowly the Veda generally speaks of them as thirce eleven. None has any ethical character except Varuna. The worship is mainly nature worship. Every part of nature is regarded as divine, while there is some conception of nature as a whole, so that we have polytheism and the commencement of both pantheism and fetishism. Everything connected with religious rites becomes also sacred divine, thus the Soma juice is now a god—and one of the mightiest gods. Worship is highly ritualistic. Sacrifice is both eucharistic and propitiatory, it has developed in extent and deepened in meaning and mystical ideas gather thickly round it. Sacerdotalism has commenced the selection and arrangement of the hymns has been mainly made by priestly hands. Domestic worship still retains a high place, but there are great public celebrations made in the open air which require a vast array of sacrificers, singers and assistants. As the ceremonies become more complex and the knowledge of the old language gradually fades these men grow into a priestly caste. The men of prayer thus begin to be exalted above their fellows and a foundation is laid on which posterity will build the great structure of Brahmanism. It is almost exclusively for temporal benefits that the deities are approached. Thus the ethical character of the Vedic faith is decidedly low.

The preceding remarks apply to the Rig Veda, but we have also to take into account the Atharva. Deterioration must have gone on rapidly for the latter book cannot well be more than a few hundred years later than the former and yet the far greater

number of its hymns stand morally on a much lower level than those of the more ancient work. We may indeed explain the inferiority of the one collection to the other, by supposing that there existed from the beginning two forms of the religion—the higher being embodied in the *Rig Veda*, and the lower in the *Atharva*. But that corruption did go on is unquestionable, and when the *Atharva*, in process of time, was put in the same place of honour with the more ancient hymns, it became impossible to separate the better from the worse, since all was alike divine¹. The *Atharva* abounds in incantations, imprecations, and prayers for the destruction of enemies. The *Rig Veda* acknowledges few or no evil divinities, but the *Atharva* constantly deprecates, by prayer and offerings, the wrath of demons. This is a great descent from earlier conceptions.

The early ritual is unfolded to us in that part of a *Veda* which is called the *Brahmana*. The earliest can hardly be much older than the sixth century B.C., but the ceremonies which they explain and inculcate may, in many cases, be more ancient. The *Brahmanas* are intellectually very poor productions. The writers were occupied with a round of ceremonies which extinguished, or excluded, thought. The rites came to be regarded as all in all, the deities addressed were of little importance in comparison. If the sacred texts had been rightly uttered, and the sacred ceremony duly performed, the incantation was complete,

¹ Professor Max Müller is never a harsh critic of Indian thought or institutions, yet one of his later utterances is the following: 'That the *Veda* is full of childish, silly, even to our minds monstrous conceptions, who will deny?' He evidently includes the *Rig Veda* in this censure.

and the end was sure to be gained. Worship was thus degraded into magic. The moral character of the worshipper was of little or no consequence.

Towards the end of this period—perhaps about 600 B.C.—the doctrine of Transmigration began to appear and to exercise a continually deepening influence. This implied an immense departure from earlier ideas. Asceticism also became prominent chiefly in connexion with the worship of the god Siva. This had probably existed before, but it became more and more influential as Vedic conceptions faded away.

A tendency to speculation—to musing rather than to action—seems inherent in the Aryan mind, or else it has been infused into it from very early days. The growth of this tendency was kept in check during the earliest period of the Aryan invasion of India, but as the Hindus steadily pressed eastward and southward following the course of the Jumna (Yamuna) and Ganges it began to assert itself. Moreover excessive ritualism necessitated a reaction. Speculation was thus contemporaneous with ceremonialism. The development of the latter was the work almost exclusively of the Brahmans, but the former engaged the minds of kings and other members of the Kshatriya caste—probably even of the Vaisya or third caste. Still it is probable that the leaders of thought were generally Brahmans.

These hermit philosophers were no systematic thinkers. Aspirations, guesses, rhapsodies—these are all we get from them, perhaps all we could reasonably expect. They did not mean to be heretical, and

they assumed the truth of the Vedic faith; but their whole strain of thought lessened the authority of the established ritual. The ceremonies were well enough for the vulgar, but there was another 'way,' far nobler, for the truly wise to follow. That was the way of knowledge.

The teaching of the Upanishads is not self-consistent, but on the whole the current of thought is strongly pantheistic. It maintains a spiritual unity, and generally regards all things else as mere appearance, unreality, the soul being not really distinct from Brahman, the One, the All. But Illusion, or Ignorance, is said to be co-eternal with Brahman, so that the doctrine is self-contradictory, asserting in the same breath one, and two, eternal existences¹.

After the doctrine of the Upanishads seems to have come that of an original void, out of which all things arose. This doctrine was formally enunciated in the metaphysics of Buddhism. The fully developed Sankhya doctrine of the existence of two eternal agencies, Soul and Nature—a system essentially dualistic—was probably later in origin.

All along, there were schools of thought opposed to the orthodox, sceptical and scoffing systems, which ridiculed earnest thought and inculcated the pursuit of worldly enjoyment. Among these the materialistic school of the Charvakas was pre-eminent.

The formulated philosophy is usually said to consist of six *Darśanas* or exhibitions, which are arranged

¹ In the fully systematized philosophy Ignorance (or Illusion) is said to be properly neither existent nor non-existent. In the Bhagavad Gita—as we saw above—the same thing is asserted of Brahman.

in pairs. These are the Nyāya and Vaiśeṣika, the Sāṅkhya and the Yoga, and the former and later Mīmāṃsā. Of these six the first two are closely related, the latter being a kind of supplement to the former. The Sāṅkhya and Yoga agree in much, but the former is agnostic while the latter acknowledges a deity. Of the two Mīmāṃsās the former treats only of Vedic interpretation under heads logically arranged. The latter, which is usually called the Vedānta (end or scope of the Vedas) is a development of the doctrine of the Upanishads, which though containing doctrines very different from the Hymns had come to be called a part of the Veda. Hence the name Vedānta. The bracketing together of schools so widely different as those of the two Mīmāṃsās is thus intelligible.

The former Mīmāṃsā has thus no philosophical doctrine. The latter Mīmāṃsā inculcates a spiritualistic pantheism and requires separate consideration.

All the other systems seek to unfold the means of attaining salvation—that is, the emancipation of the soul. Salvation, they assert, can be attained only through knowledge. All works, whether good or bad, hinder salvation; virtue is to be discarded as earnestly as vice.

Vedantism is now by far the most prevalent system of Indian philosophy, and it has affected the thinking even of the common people so far as to make them say that their souls are portions of God. It affirms the existence of the sole Spirit or Self. There is no material world save in appearance; it *seems* but is not. An eternal illusion or ignorance projects its

appearance The one Self the Vedas 'intelligence and bliss (not an intelligent or blissful being) So the Vedantists say, and try to think. The practical effect of such thoughts (or words) is evas al A thorough-going Vedantist looks on right and wrong as mere semblances, and easily breaks through all moral restraints Farther, even a moral Vedantist must be selfish for himself Endeavour for the good of others is to him impossible, he is entirely occupied with the effort to know and feel his identity with the Self He is without any wish to play on words, we are compelled to say he cannot - but be supremely selfish Ignorance

The lover of his kind cannot but be deeply saddened by the spectacle of successive generations of men dreaming life away in such unprofitable and foolish dreams To the success of true thought Indian philosophy has contributed nothing that which of permanent value The great lesson which we have learned from it is the lesson of humility In the review of all those systems of philosophy so contradictory, presumptuous, and futile what an emphasis do the words of St Paul receive 'After that, in the wisdom of God, the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of the preachers, eaching to save them that believe' In the strength of its own fancied wisdom the mind of India sought to scale the heaven of heavens, and there blend itself with God. Vain attempt! But now a hand is outstretched from the heaven of heavens to raise it to that height, and so impart to it a fellowship, yea a union, with Deity more vital and more blissful than, in their wild dreams, the ancient sages ever ventured to conceive

So much for the philosophy, or esoteric faith of India. With regard to the popular system that still reigns over nearly two hundred millions we need not in this recapitulation, say much. The Puranas in which the orthodox system is embodied have exceedingly little merit: they are tasteless and extravagant productions. The faith which they inculcate is an incongruous mixture of pantheism and polytheism. The polytheism often runs into the grossest fetishism. Each divinity has a history, but for the most part a history of sin and shame. The fundamental distinction between god and devil is not recognized: that is to say, the characters and doings ascribed to the divinities are often diabolical. The worship runs into endless ceremonialism, which in most cases is as childish as it is complex. Religion is transformed into magic. Prayer is an incantation.

True sects and what we have called reforming sects, dissatisfied with the orthodox system have so far modified it. The followers of Śiva tend to extreme asceticism and self torture. The followers of Viṣṇu have brought forward the doctrine of *deotion* but in most cases the devotion is paid to Kṛṣṇa whose worship leads necessarily to corruption. Vile practices, as a part of religion have flourished among the followers of Viṣṇu than among almost any other class of religionists. The Vallabhacharya sect affords a conspicuous example of this.

Of the worship of the Śakti as enjoined in the Tantras we need say nothing more: it is painful even to think of the moral degradation it involves.

These remarks may seem severe, and it may be

contended that Christians can hardly do justice to a faith so unlike their own as Hinduism is. Let me quote then the testimony of a writer who cannot be suspected of any bias in favour of orthodox Christianity. Dr. Moncrie Conway has visited India, and has seen Hinduism with his own eyes. Of Hinduism as it *was* he has a high opinion far higher than we have, but we are now concerned with his estimate of Hinduism as it *is*. He thus writes:

‘When I went to the great cities of India the contrast between the real and the ideal was heart-breaking. In all those teeming myriads of worshippers, not one man, not even one woman, seemed to entertain the shadow of a conception of anything ideal, or spiritual, or religious, or even mythological, in their ancient creed. To all of them the great false god which they worshipped—a hulk of roughly carved wood or stone—appeared to be the authentic presentment of some terrible demon or invisible power, who would treat them cruelly if they did not give him some melted butter. Of religion in a spiritual sense there is none. If you wish for religion you will not find it in Brahmanism.’

Coming from such a quarter, this is a terrible indictment. We do not know that, in speaking of Hinduism, any Christian missionary has used sterner words. Yet assuredly such is the estimate which every truth-loving man must form of the religion, provided his eyes are open. The contemplation is profoundly saddening.

‘O miseris hominum mentes, O pectora creca!’

CHAPTER XIII

RECENT HINDU REFORMERS

WE have had occasion to refer to men who in past ages strove to purify Hinduism from some of its more erroneous doctrines and debasing rites. The most noted of these was Buddha but quite possibly he was preceded by others whose names are now forgotten.

We have above adverted to the interesting question whether Christian ideas are incorporated in that striking work the Bhagavad Gita which has so powerfully influenced the later Sanskrit literature. Again religious movements occurred in Southern India from the ninth to the twelfth century in which we can trace with considerable probability not only Christian but Mohammedan influences.

In the seventh century (about 639 A.D.) Christians were welcome at the court of Siladitya in Northern India. We have also seen that from about the year 1000 in Northern India Islam vehemently iconoclastic and generally victorious in battle, exerted a powerful influence on Hindu faith.

We must now come down to more recent days.

It was to be expected that the large influx of Christian ideas and Western ideas generally which

has lately taken place, would powerfully affect Hinduism. Christianity is advancing in some places even rapidly, and, in every place where it is proclaimed, the progress is steady. The time when the higher Hindus regarded with supreme contempt the efforts of Christian teachers to proclaim the Gospel has for ever passed away, although indifference may still occasionally be professed. But the influence of Christianity extends far beyond the circle of the baptized. The Gospel is now performing among the people of India that work which, before and after the Christian era, was performed by ancient Judaism among the inhabitants of the Roman Empire. Speaking of the Jews, Seneca uses the strong language 'The vanquished have given laws to the victors' *Victoribus victi leges dederunt*. The great conceptions which were entertained by the Jews regarding God, and the soul, and holiness, and sin, and heaven and hell, could not but tell powerfully on all thinking men. Even so in India at the present day, wherever Christianity is preached, the great truths in which it stands opposed to Hinduism are steadily making way. The unity of God—the evil of idolatry—the evil of caste—the goodness of God—the surpassing elevation of the character of Christ, a conviction, or half conviction, of these and other fundamental verities is gradually extending among the people. Ideas change before institutions. Old customs moulder away but slowly, even when the belief on which they were based has broken down, but the mighty change goes on silently, yet irresistibly. The change commenced more than

a century ago in Bengal, in which the most noted reformers of recent times have appeared

The first of these innovators who attracted public attention was Rammohun Roy a Brahman born in the neighbourhood of Calcutta in 1774. He was from the outset a man of inquiring mind and as early as the age of sixteen he wrote a tract against idolatry. Apparently the monotheism of Islam had impressed him even before he knew much of Christianity. He had a good knowledge of Arabic and Persian. The cruel practice of widow burning called forth his earnest opposition and he began to denounce other cruel and superstitious observances as corruptions of the ancient Hindu faith. To be a reformer in those days entailed both obloquy and persecution. His own nearest relatives were strongly opposed to his revolutionary sentiments. Nevertheless he persevered. In 1814 he settled in Calcutta and meetings were soon held in his house for the discussion of religious subjects. In 1816 he published in English a work on the Vedantic philosophy. In 1817 he began to study Christianity. In 1818 he published a pamphlet against widow burning. In Calcutta he had frequent intercourse with missionaries and other Europeans. He studied Greek and Hebrew that he might read the Bible in the original languages. In 1820 he published a book with the remarkable title—*The Precepts of Jesus the Guide to Peace and Happiness*. He often gave expression to the conviction that the teachings of Christ were the best and deepest he knew but he maintained that precious truth was also contained in the ancient Hindu book.

the Veda. It is important to remember that by the Veda he meant the Upanishads—the philosophical treatises appended to the Veda proper.

Meetings continued to be held at his house, they were now weekly, and largely attended. In January, 1830, a hall for public worship was opened. Every Wednesday extracts from the Vedas (i.e. Upanishads) were read in Sanskrit, hymns sung in Bengali, and a discourse was delivered, generally in the same language. Caste, however, was to some extent maintained, the holy texts were chanted by the holy men (the Brahmans) in an adjoining room, into which none but Brahmans could enter. The society called the Brahmo Somaj more correctly Brahma Samāj was thus formed. We may translate the name, *Assembly of believers in Brahman*.

The hymns sung at the meetings were usually of Rammohun Roy's own composition. He was not devoid of poetic sentiment, and he had much devotional earnestness.

In November, 1830, being commissioned by the Emperor of Delhi to proceed to England as his envoy, he sailed for Liverpool, which he reached in April, 1831. He was now a great man in public estimation, having received from Delhi the title of Raja. Much notice was taken of him both in London and Paris. But health gave way, and he died at Bristol in September, 1833.¹

¹ It is interesting to note that Rammohun Roy had continued to be on very friendly terms with Christian missionaries, notwithstanding a passage-at-arms which he had with Dr Marshman of Serampore. When

We have dwelt at considerable length on the events in Rammohun Roy's history because he occupied a very conspicuous place as the pioneer of reform in modern days and because also of the high moral courage which he exhibited in declaring his convictions even when he stood single against a host. Intellectually though by no means a small man he was still not so great as he was morally. He was banished from his father's house and even in Calcutta he had to walk about armed—his life being in danger. On some important questions he held opinions that were mutually irreconcilable or else from time to time, his views fluctuated.¹ He never was an orthodox Christian. He did not believe in miracles nor in the full divinity of Christ. But he believed in Christ as divinely commissioned and as a Being whom God had anointed and exalted above all creatures and prophets. He even spoke of Christ as the Redeemer, Mediator and Intercessor with God on behalf of His followers and held that He will judge the world at the last day.

The cause for which Rammohun Roy had earnestly

Dr Duff opened his educational institution in 1830 he received hearty sympathy and very valuable help from Rammohun Roy. Dr Duff and his missionary associates took the deepest interest in his movement and showed him all possible sympathy in his trial. His earnest pleadings against idolatry had aroused the most violent opposition and even European thought he was going too far. Speaking of this period he says: "This roused such a feeling against me that I was at last deserted by every person except two or three Scotch friends to whom and the nation to which they belong I am very grateful." (*Lecture on Rammohun Roy* by Rev. Dr J. S. Macdonald p. 9)

Such was the opinion of the late Rev. Krishna Mohun Banerjee—himself a very distinguished reformer.

laboured suffered a great loss on his removal. But in the year 1818, Debendernath Tagore, a young man of great wealth and earnest character, had come forward in the cause of religious reform. He joined the Brahmo Somaj in 1842 (some say earlier), and gave it a kind of constitution, introducing important new rules. He preached in Bengali with equal earnestness and eloquence. By 1844 the society was fully organized. Every member now bound himself to abandon idolatry and pray daily to the One God. No distinct declaration had yet been made regarding the authority of the Vedas, but it was felt that so important a question must be decided. Four Brahmans were sent to Benares for the study of the sacred books. In four or five years they returned to Calcutta, and, after earnest discussions, the doctrine of the infallibility of the Veda was rejected by Debendernath and a majority of members in 1850. This was a bold step—indeed, a radical revolution. He published a short confession of faith, consisting of four articles. The Brahmans discarded belief in any written revelation, and declared the works of God in nature a sufficient exhibition of truth and duty. ‘The rock of intuition’ began to be spoken of, and every attack made in Europe on what was called ‘book-revelation’ was eagerly repeated in India. In fact, it would be a serious mistake to hold that the changes we have been chronicling were spontaneous movements of the Hindu mind. They seldom, or never, were so.

But a new champion now appeared in the person of Keshub Chunder Sen. He was born in November,

1836 not of a Brahmanical but a Vaidya family—the members of which were so far imbued with English views yet remained in practice orthodox Hindus. He received a fair English education. In early life his ruling passion seems to have been a desire of pre-eminence. Indeed he never lost it. By the year 1855 he had begun to interest himself in reform and his whole character seems to have deepened. He now gathered knowledge from all sides courting the society of Christian teachers. We heard from his own lips that his religious views were drawn in the first instance from the Bible and the writings of Dr Chalmers. But he read extensively and among other books he evidently studied the writings of Theodore Parker who for a time was very popular in India. He joined the Brahmo Somaj in 1857. Soon after this Debendernath Tagore returned to Calcutta after three years absence and a mutual affection sprung up between him and Keshub. The latter was pressed by his family to conform to orthodox Hindu rites but he firmly refused. He taught a school in Bengal and lectured in English to the Brahmo Somaj under Debendernath's patronage. In 1861 he abandoned all secular work resolving to devote himself to religious reform. Up to a certain point his friend and patron could go along with him. Thus Debendernath allowed his daughter to be married in 1861 without any idolatrous rites. Idolatry was rejected and religious ritual was remodelled. Debendernath farther agreed to discard his own sacred thread. But here he drew the line. Ancient customs not openly idolatrous he

would at all events allow. The friction between the old man and the young became more and more painful. Ardent, ambitious, self-reliant, Keshub was uncontrollable, and when a marriage was celebrated by him in August, 1864, between two persons of different castes, Debendranath informed him that their co-operation must cease. Keshub and his friends were separated from the Somaj in February, 1866, and they formed a new society in November of the same year. By August, 1869, they had built and opened a new *mandir*—a place of worship—of their own.

Since the separation, the original Somaj (Adi Samaj) has been very little heard of. Raja Narayana Bose, one of its leading members, has committed the deplorable mistake of including the Tantras among the recognized Hindu Scriptures. If the Adi Samaj has moved at all, it has moved back towards orthodox Hinduism, and its influence in advancing practical reform has not been appreciable.

Keshub now called his section 'The Brahmo Somaj of India'. He gave public lectures—especially one great lecture every year. That delivered in May, 1866, on *Jesus Christ Europe and Asia*, attracted much attention, and was believed to indicate on Keshub's part a strong leaning to Christianity. Another lecture, on *Great Men*, which was delivered a few months later, implied a renunciation of some of his advanced positions regarding Christ. He now spoke of Him as only 'the prince of prophets'. His followers largely shared his own ardour. Religious festivals, attended with a large measure of excitement,

began to be held—the first of them in November 1867. The services contrasted strongly with the languid worship of the old society. At the same time practical efforts in the direction of social reform were energetically made. A Missionary Institute was set up. Much was accomplished on behalf of women. A Female Normal School was established and in March 1872 a Native Marriage Act was passed by Government which legalized the union of two persons of different castes and fixed on fourteen as the lowest age for the marriage of females. This was a most important measure for the custom of child marriages is one of the worst and most inveterate of Indian ills. Further it prohibited bigamy and allowed widows to remarry—two things of infinite importance. Efforts were also made for the promotion of temperance many of the younger generation of Hindus when educated having yielded to the temptation of drink. Before this however Keshub had paid a visit to Britain. He did so pretty early in 1870 and in April of that year a meeting was called in London to welcome him in which Dean Stanley Lord Lawrence Dr James Martineau and other distinguished men took part. He was also granted a private interview with the Queen. He was allowed to preach in a great many places of worship connected with the Unitarians. Of orthodox Christians he saw comparatively little.

By the year 1873 it was becoming plain that an explosion among the members of the Somaj was at hand. The autocracy exercised by Mr Sen was felt by many to be a heavy yoke. He believed

in 'Great Men' as fully as Carlyle did in 'Heroes', and from him, indeed, Keshub had drawn much of his teaching on the subject. He held that, from time to time, Divine Providence raises up men endowed with special powers, and intended to introduce new forms of religion, and he expected—if he did not exact—the homage due to a teacher so commissioned. Yet, all the while, his words disclaimed the personal authority which he exercised. The murmurers were in a minority, but the disaffection was steadily increasing.

Regarding the Somaj and its doings, the language employed by Keshub, and still more by his followers, was always that of the loftiest self-assurance. Every effort was called a victory, and celebrated in strains of triumphant exultation. This tone of exaggeration alarmed many of his friends outside as much as his new ideas—though some of these were certainly strange enough.

He had instituted important practical reforms but to several innovations demanded by not a few he was strongly opposed. He held that many were rushing on too fast in the emancipation of women whose visible attendance at public meetings he disliked as, at all events, premature. Perhaps he was right, but many Brahmos, and Brahmo ladies, thought otherwise, and he was obliged to give in. Keshub had loudly complained that, in the management of the original Somaj, Debendernath had been an irresponsible dictator. It soon came to be widely whispered that he himself was equally exclusive. The crisis which was certain to come arrived in 1878,

when Mr Sen's daughter was married to the Raja of Kuch Bihar. The bride and bridegroom were both somewhat under the age which had been fixed as the earliest allowable by the Brahmo Marriage Act which he himself had been mainly instrumental in getting passed. Vehement remonstrances were addressed to him and a party proposed his deposition as minister of the Brahmo Mandir. Keshub called in the police and only by their aid was he able to keep possession of the building.

A great revolt from his authority immediately succeeded and the Sadharan Brahmo Somaj was regularly constituted on May 15. An appeal had been made to the provincial societies and no fewer than twenty one of these consisting of fully four hundred members male and female joined the new body. This number amounted to fully two thirds of the whole. It must have been a terrible blow to Mr Sen. He and his friends denounced the rebels in very bitter language and the strife became scandalously hot. The irony of fate was in it the Brahmos had often reprobated the divisions among Christian churches and now the church of the future as Keshub had begun to denominate the Somaj was carrying on civil war and with poisoned weapons.

In calmly looking back on the struggle it is plain that both sides were to blame. The seceders took the unkindest view of everything Keshub did and attributed it to sordid motives. On the other hand although not always wanting in power of accommodation, he scornfully tossed aside all remon-

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strances, and declared himself guided in the whole proceeding by an express intimation of the will of Heaven

In one point of view, the great secession was a relief to Mr Sen. Men of abilities equal, and education superior, to his own, had hitherto acted as a drag on his movements. He was now freed from their interference, and could deal with his remaining followers as he pleased. Though undoubtedly there were among these some able men, yet their admiration of the leader was unbounded, and perhaps they hardly sought to check his inventiveness. Ideas that had been working in his mind now attained rapid development

Within two years (in 1880), the old name of the Society was changed into that of the 'New Dispensation'. In a public lecture regarding this new creation, Mr Sen used very daring language. He claimed equality for it with the Jewish and Christian dispensations—nay, virtually, if not formally, superiority, and for himself a Divine commission and 'singular' authority. 'When men,' said he, 'are hopelessly gone in the way of misery and ruin it is then that Providence sends to the world one of those men whose life has been sold to His almighty will.' Such a man he fully believed himself to be. This conviction steadily deepened. In 1888 the organ of his sect declared that the 'New Dispensation could have no religious union with those that ridicule the inspiration of Keshub Chunder Sen'. He described the New Dispensation as 'the harmony of all scriptures and prophets and dispensations,

the science which finds and explains, and harmonizes all religions. Its function as Mr Sen understood it was certainly a marvellous one. It gives to history a meaning to the action of Providence a consistency and to successive dispensations a continuity.

It is the wonderful solvent which fuses all dispensations into a new chemical compound.

As Mr Sen expressly put it all religions are true. He did not say merely that there is truth in all. The two propositions are of course widely different. Much of a rhetorician and a poet he never was an accurate thinker.¹

In May 1879 Mr Sen had expressed himself in remarkable words regarding the claims of Christ 'None but Jesus none but Jesus none but Jesus ever deserved this precious diadem India and none but Jesus shall have it. Such language of course arrested attention in Europe and awakened high expectations. But the Jesus of whom Mr Sen spoke so earnestly was an imaginary being and not the historic Christ. And notwithstanding his continual cry for catholicity this conception became more and more one sided—more and more national. The real Christ is neither Asiatic nor European. He realizes the highest ideal of humanity. The Christ to whom Mr Sen seemed more and more to turn was an Asiatic a Hindu—a Hindu ascetic—in fact a *yogi*. Every Christian belief and rite Mr Sen in like

¹ The *Sunday Mirror* the organ of the Society stated the matter thus. 'Our position is not that truths are to be found in all religions. It is that all the established religions of the world are true.' This was in Oct. 1881.

manner, contrived somehow to Hinduize. Was all this from policy, or was his mind beginning to give way?

It seems strange that the name of Christ does not occur in the formally enunciated Creed of the New Dispensation (1880). It inculcated belief in the following articles

- 1 One God, one Scripture, one Church
- 2 Eternal progress of the soul
- 3 Communion of prophets and saints
- 4 Fatherhood and Motherhood of God
- 5 Brotherhood of man and sisterhood of woman
- 6 Harmony of knowledge and holiness, love and work, *yoga* and asceticism, in their highest development
- 7 Loyalty to Sovereign

This strange summary suggests many questions, but we content ourselves with remarking that it contains no reference to Sin or Redemption, any more than to the name of the Redeemer. All along Mr. Sen had spoken earnestly of the Fatherhood of God and Brotherhood of Man, although assuredly it was to Christianity, not Hinduism, he owed these great conceptions. He now added the 'sisterhood of woman,' and the 'Motherhood of God.' I presume he drew this last item from his old favourite, Theodore Parker, but he probably would have called it a repetition, or exaltation, of the old Hindu belief that there is a female counterpart of every divinity. Some have said that it was probably introduced with a view to conciliate the worshippers of Durga and Kali—those great goddesses of Bengal. If it was for the latter reason, Mr. Sen doubtless would have said that there is an element of truth even in the worship of these sanguinary deities.

No modern sceptic could be more intolerant of what he called *dogma*. 'Who would stumble on' cried he 'with the huge millstone of lifeless dogmas hanging round his neck?

As early as 1868 a great leaning to Ritualism had been noticed in the services of the Somaj and this had gone on ever increasing. Under the New Dispensation it became altogether extravagant.

A public proclamation was now issued purporting to be from God as India's Mother. The whole thing was startling and many, even of Keshub's friends declared it to be really if unintentionally profane.

Next in the Flag Ceremony on January 30 1881 the flag or banner of the New Dispensation received a homage which was barely distinguishable from adoration.

One of the great deities in the Veda is Agni (*ignis*) the god of fire and the ceremonies connected with this ancient worship retain a high place in Hinduism to this day. It was painful to see the New Dispensation give its sanction to it in the following way. A pile of wood was lighted clarified butter such as the old Rishis used was poured upon it, and prayers were addressed to it ending in these words 'O brilliant Fire in thee we behold our resplendent Lord'. In a land wedded to idolatry as India is such things were fearfully perilous.

In March 1881 Mr Sen and his friends introduced celebrations in imitation of the two Christian sacraments. To all Christian minds this was unspeakably distressing yet we are far from saying that Mr Sen intended anything like mimicry. He had noted the

beauty and solemnity of the rites of Baptism and the Eucharist, and he imagined he could secure what was essential in them in a way more in accordance with Indian usages¹. Instead of bread and wine he employed rice and water. Round both were flowers and leaves. He read part of the twenty-second chapter of the Gospel of St Luke, but, in the prayer which he offered, there was no reference whatsoever to the death of Christ, or to the commemorative character of the Eucharist. But we cannot dwell on this part of the subject, even the few things we have mentioned will deeply pain our readers, as assuredly they do ourselves. It is strange that Mr Sen never seems to have thought that Christians could be offended by this parody of an awfully solemn rite. Other institutions followed, mostly copies of Christian ones. One of the most notable of these was the Apostolic Durbar, or Court of Apostles, who were to be the commissioned heralds of the New Dispensation.

An attached friend and adherent of Keshub Mr P C Mozumdar wrote in August, 1881 'Keshub is continually becoming more metaphysical and more mystical. Recently he has very much given himself up to symbolism. There has been a good deal of flags, flowers, fires, and sacraments of all kinds²'.

In 1882 Mr Sen gave a lecture entitled 'The Marvellous Mystery the Trinity'. There was im-

¹ As the organ of the New Dispensation expressed it, 'The ceremony of adapting the sacraments to Hindu life was performed with due solemnity'.

² Max Muller's *Biographical Essays*, p 154

measurable presumption in the way he dealt with this profoundest of mysteries. He said Europe¹ be silent while a humble Asiatic discourses on the doctrine of the Trinity. He then propounded a theory closely akin to the heresy called Sabellianism.

In 1882 he also introduced dancing into the service of his church. The shout the gallop and the joyous whirl round and round went on till the space in front of the pulpit became hot as a furnace. Next in January 1883 Mr Sen delivered a public lecture on *Asias message to Europe*. This was the last time he spoke publicly in English. We had seen him shortly before in a private interview and hopes of his future usefulness which had begun to fade had been some what revived by the way in which he had expressed himself. But the lecture was in no way satisfactory. For one thing it was too evident that Keshubs powers were failing. There was no fire no rush of feeling in his utterance there was fluency but no real eloquence. And the great ruling sentiment of the lecture was that Asia is the mother land of religions that Europe must accept what has been given to Asia and that the thing requisite to constitute the faith of the future—the religion of humanity—is the blending of all the systems into one. One could not help thinking what the prophet Elijah would have said if he had been told that Baal and Jehovah were two forms of one divinity. Could the speaker himself really hold that the stupendous fusion, or confusion he recommended was desirable or possible? He had said when in England in 1870 ✓

Hinduism has degenerated into a most horrid and

abominable system of idolatry and polytheism,' was that his opinion still? If he meant that the religions to be fused together, 'into a new chemical compound,' should first be purified from their corruptions, why did he not say so? Many came away from the exhibition sad at heart¹

He had now really begun to apologize for idolatry 'Every idol worshipped by the Hindus represents an attribute of God' This was said in August, 1880

I do not profess myself fully able to understand Mr Sen's character I by no means tax him with insincerity, but I found it difficult to reconcile his private and public utterances, and I was startled by a reference he made, in another private interview, to his 'policy' Yes, he was politic, and, at the same time, wildly visionary I have spoken of an interview I had with him shortly before the lecture just referred to Two missionary friends were with me Our conversation extended over two hours, and all the characteristic truths of Christianity were considered, such as the Trinity, the Divinity of Christ, the atonement wrought by Him, salvation by faith in Christ, regeneration and sanctification as effected by the Holy Spirit, communion with God and Christ,—and on these great doctrines none of us could discover any palpable difference between Keshub's views and

¹ On August 5, 1882, Keshub wrote to Prof Max Muller 'There was a time when an aggressive warfare had to be kept up, and we had to put down idolatry with iconoclastic fury Put the New Dispensation is a work of construction It fulfils, does not destroy, it builds, does not demolish' Translating this into plain English, does it not mean that henceforth he would tolerate idolatry? We must ask again Was this said from policy, or was Keshub's mind giving way?

our own. Two points indeed remained on which the diversity was great. He did not believe in miracles therefore not in the bodily resurrection of Christ. But the whole in review was deeply solemn and at the end we all united in prayer for Divine teaching. None of the survivors can forget that remarkable evening, and the brotherly fellowship which we all had together.

It is only right to say that Mr Sen's references to missionaries were ever kind and friendly. He had controversies with some of them and on one occasion his Brahmo belief was pressed by the Christian spirit.¹ But the cause of defeat never ruffled his temper. He said when in England: Honour all honour to that sacred band of energetic and self-sacrificing missionaries who have gone out to India on a sacred mission. Honour all honour to them. And all honour as we to the Brahmo leader who both in England and India—and sometimes in opposition to the feeling of his audience—could utter such sentiments as these.

After the death of Mr Sen there was a great misunderstanding, between his family and the so-called Apostolic Durbar on the one side and some of his old followers on the other—particularly Mr Frodo C. Mozumdar. Mr Mozumdar is closely connected with Mr Sen's family but was unable to fall in with the extravagant veneration with which they and the Durbar cherished Keshub's memory. They held his pulpit too sacred to be entered by any other

¹ His especial opponents were the Rev. Lal Behari Day and the Rev. Dr. Dyson.

person—it must remain unoccupied, the carpet on which he stood in the Mandir (church) was treated as a sacred object, indeed, what amounted almost to relic-worship appeared in connexion with the memorials of Keshub

We have traced the career of Mr. Sen with attention, but it is not needful that the later history of the 'New Dispensation' should occupy us long

Before Keshub's death bitter disputes had arisen among its members 'They pierced his heart and made it bleed profusely' After his death the disputes continued, and even increased Mr P C Mozumdar has contended earnestly for the rights of the congregation, in opposition to the despotism of the 'Apostolic Durbar' Of late there has come a very unhappy change a return to Vedantism, and this is expressly avowed As our readers have already seen, the doctrine of the Vedanta is wholly pantheistic

Very recently the leaders have invited a Unitarian missionary to visit Calcutta, but they disclaim any desire to be considered as united, or even closely connected, with him We are sorry for this With all its sad defects, Unitarianism is far in advance of the present tenets of the 'New Dispensation'

The Sadharana Somaj, which broke off from Keshub's party in 1878, is or at least was a body of considerable influence It has perpetrated no

¹ On A and keeps clear of mysticism As a reforming, was a time to put down idolatry, it has done good It has gone is a work of constant it would call the emancipation of not demolish' That Keshub's party has done, or is likely to that henceforth he would this said from policy, or began modestly enough. At first

it promised well but it soon grew almost as boastful as Keshub's party. Ere long, however the language became that of mortification and defeat. Disputes also arose, and leading members quitted the Somaj in disgust. We hear little about it at present.

We desire to speak with much respect of the two original leaders of this Somaj. One of them was a graduate of Cambridge and a Calcutta barrister—an able thoughtful man. The other was a Brahman well acquainted with English and also possessed of no small measure of Sanskrit lore.

Both the Sadharan Somaj and the New Dispensation have been affected of late years by what is called a revival of Hinduism. There is nothing to surprise us in this movement. No reasonable man expected Hinduism to expire quietly. The orthodox party—a very large party indeed—are in alarm. Christianity open and avowed advances steadily if perhaps slowly and ideas that are traceable to Christianity seem to pervade the air. Orthodox Hindus therefore, fight vehemently against the invader and even when they fear that the ancient creed is (to use a Brahman's words) sick unto death they earnestly strive to cherish and prolong its sinning life.

These are the men of whom not a few join the National Congress to contend for political privileges while they bitterly oppose every reform social or religious. A more enlightened party desire social and to some extent religious reform but at the same time they have no kind feeling towards Bible Christianity and the ill omened words may sometimes be heard from their lips 'Our national religion. This

they imagine, if stripped of its grosser parts, with gleanings from Christianity, might still serve as a faith for India. Our remarks apply specially to Bengal, but they are largely true of India generally¹

Movements not unlike that of the Brahmo Somaj have occurred in other parts of India. One of the earliest attempts at reform was made in Bombay from about the year 1846, by Mr Dadoba Pandurang. He and his friend Mr Nana Narayan, as well as his brother—now the esteemed Dr Atmaram Pandurang

and Mr Ramachandria Balkrishna, had much intercourse with missionaries, two of the four, indeed, asked to be received into the Christian Church by baptism, though they afterwards drew back. It was in or about the year mentioned that Dadoba Pandurang, who was superintendent of the Government Normal School, formed the Paramahansa Sabha, which was a kind of eclectic society. The members met once a week, and commenced their proceedings with prayer. They pledged themselves to disregard the distinctions of caste. Branch societies were formed at four or five out-stations, and the society was somewhat lively for a time. It became extinct in 1860. But about 1850, an association more distinctively religious had been formed in Bombay under the name of the Prarthana Sabha, or Prayer Union. The main articles enumerated in its constitution were the following

- 1 I believe in one God
- 2 I renounce idolatry
- 3 I will do my best to lead a moral life
- 4 If I

¹ Consult Dr Murdoch's interesting paper, *The Brahma Samaj and other Modern Eclectic Systems in India*

commit any sin through the weakness of my moral nature I will repent of it and ask the pardon of God

The society, after some time began to languish but in 1867 it was succeeded by the Prarthana Somaj which still exists in Bombay with branches in Poona Ahmedabad Surat and a few other places Able men have joined the Somaj such as Professor Bhambarkar and the Hon G M Ranade Doubtless there are differences among the members in their feelings but the glowing tributes which Mr Sen sometimes paid to Christ and Christianity seem unknown in the Prarthana Somaj Brahminical intellect mainly rules it Its religious hymns are largely drawn from the writings of the Marathi poet Tukaram—the idolatrous portions being left out

It is very difficult to say whether the Prarthana Somaj is making progress Their organ complains from time to time that it is advancing so slowly There are several branches of the society in the cities of Western India The programme of the annual conference held in March 1896 is before us The meetings lasted ten days The most notable point of the whole was a love feast (a name borrowed from Christianity) in which about fifty men—men only—seem to have participated They were eager to explain that all the food had been cooked by Brahmans There was then no breach of the rules of caste to these they still submit though we presume they despise them

A similar movement not powerful yet interesting has taken place in Madras Mr Sen paid a visit to the city of Madras in February 1864 and produced

a deep impression by his lectures. Shortly afterwards a society was formed under the name of Veda Somaj, in connexion with which weekly lectures were held, and considerable activity exhibited. Branches were formed in various cities of Southern India. By 1868 the leading men in the society had passed away, and a reconstruction took place under a young man whose name deserves special notice. Sridharalu Naidu. He had been impressed by what he had heard of the Brahmo Somaj in Bengal, and resolved to study the system at head-quarters. His means were scanty, and it was with difficulty he could make his way to Calcutta. After about eight months' earnest inquiry into the principles of the Somaj, he returned to Madras, and in June, 1871, formed 'The Brahmo Somaj of Southern India'. The Somaj sent a memorial to the Viceroy in favour of the Brahmo Marriage Bill, and when it had passed the Legislative Council, Sridharalu performed the first Brahmo marriage in September, 1871. He was diligent in the use of the press, and in making missionary tours. The record of his doings leaves on the mind the impression of a single-eyed, earnest man, who nobly devoted his life to the prosecution of high, unselfish ends. Our so-called Indian reformers have often been mere talkers, but he was a true reformer, and his deeds were in accordance with his words. The funerals of former sectaries of the Madras Society had been conducted with idolatrous rites, but, before his death, Sridharalu wrote with his own hand the words 'My funeral should be simple, with only Brahmic prayers'. He died in January, 1874.

His successor survived him only a year, and the

Somaj did very little till 1878. Then a dispute arose between one party which accepted the views of the New Dispensation of Calcutta and another which allied itself with the Sadharana Somaj. A split took place in 1884. Since that time neither of the two branches seems to have accomplished or even attempted much.

Another remarkable movement of the Indian mind has been exhibited in the formation of what is called the Arya Somaj. Its founder was a Gujarati Brahman born in Kathiawar. His father was a devoted worshipper of Siva and taught his son to be the same. The son was of an inquiring turn of mind and soon began to doubt whether the idols were real deities. He paid much attention to the Vedas. The sudden death of a sister led him to serious thoughts about the world to come. His father was preparing to get him married and to avoid this he fled from home—was recovered but again escaped. Ere long he joined the order of religious mendicants called San'yasi receiving the name of Davananda Sarasvati. He continued to travel about for years still intent on acquiring religious knowledge. By the year 1880 the man and his opinions began to attract public attention. By this time he had come to see that only the Hymns of the Veda could be received as fully authoritative since the Brahmanas and Upanishads (the ritual and philosophical treatises) contained much that was wrong, or at least doubtful. He declared that the Hymns taught strict monotheism—the many names Agni, Indra and all the rest being various designations of one being. Idolatry he

renounced. He said he found in the Vedic Hymns express references to many principles and facts which only modern science has discovered.

The Hymns, as we saw when treating of the Veda, certainly do not countenance idol-worship, but the hope of Dayananda to prove them monotheistic was founded on a delusion as much so as the attempt, which he also made, to read the latest discoveries of science in them. All real Sanskritists scouted these ideas as preposterous, it was a desperate effort to save the reputation of the Veda at all hazards. Dayananda carried on disputations, like the schoolmen of medieval times, in many places and his eloquence secured a following of young men who were not well acquainted with ancient Hindu literature. But at a great convocation of learned Brahmans in Calcutta, his views in so far as they differed from the ordinary belief were declared to be unsound. This was a heavy blow, nevertheless the indefatigable Pandit continued travelling, lecturing, publishing, till he died in Rajputana, in October, 1883, at the age probably of fifty-nine.

The Arya Somaj still lives, and flourishes perhaps more than any other modern offshoot of Hinduism. It professes to accept the teaching of Dayananda. *The Hymn-book of the Arya Somaj*, as published in London in 1886, contains first the Gayatri, badly transliterated in Roman characters, with a long 'Explanation,' which gives a very wrong view of the meaning of that celebrated text. Then come twenty pieces that may be called religious hymns. These are compositions chiefly of Watts, Cowper,

and Montgomery There are five other poetical pieces purely patriotic Two of them must have been composed by imperfectly educated Hindus for they are very faulty in rhyme rhythm and expression Then follows a hymn in Roman characters with an English version The whole ends with a statement in eight short clauses of the principles of the Arya Somaj In no part of the book is there any mention of the name of Christ

To a certain extent Dayananda was a reformer He rejected the system of caste and image worship He forbade child marriages and allowed widows to remarry We believe the Arya Somaj in these points adheres to the views of its founder They are important points undoubtedly But unhappily the members of the Somaj are among the most violent opponents of Christianity Clamour and insult would seem to be their favourite weapons in dealing with Christian missionaries¹

We have lately heard of a great dispute in the Arya Somaj of the Punjab One party sees no sin in eating animal food the other is strongly opposed to it

The Bombay branch seems equally hostile to the Prarthana Somaj and to Christianity

The state of things in the East has perhaps been in so far affected by the remarkable assembly held at Chicago in 1893 Representatives of nearly every kind of religious belief were there Most of the Orientals came arrayed in quaint picturesque attire and they attracted of course immense attention

¹ See *The Arya Somaj* by the Rev H Forman

'Foreigners,' says an American paper, 'were in demand,' and curiosity was whetted to its sharpest edge

We have no desire to speak slightly of the 'Parliament of Religions' It is true that most of those who had any knowledge of the Eastern mind were, from the outset, very doubtful of the expediency of the movement, but, to others, it naturally seemed a reasonable hope that, if men came together in a friendly spirit to compare their different religious beliefs, the gain would be appreciable We do not know, however, that the hope has been fulfilled

We fear the men from the East mistook the politeness with which they were received as guests for sympathy with their opinions Very singular, at all events, have been the accounts they have transmitted to Asia regarding the effect of their expositions of the Oriental creeds They had carried the war into the enemy's country, and were everywhere victorious! America, as some of them wrote, was tired of Christianity!

Without disrespect to others, we may select Mr P C Mozumdar as a representative of the truly advanced and intelligent Hindus He said, 'Representatives of all religions, may all your religions merge in the Fatherhood of God and the brotherhood of man, so that Christ's prophecy may be fulfilled, and mankind become one kingdom under God as our Father' Excellent, so far

But Mr Protap Chunder Mozumdar seems to have made much less impression than a young man who has assumed the honorific title of Swami a step which

CHAPTER XIV

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

THE systems of reformed Hinduism to which we have been adverting are all of them interesting and instructive. We may also call them hopeful—hopeful in the sense that they seem to be transitional and preparatory. They form a middle ground between Hinduism and Christianity, from which more earnest souls will gradually find their way to the Gospel.

But other systems of thought are at work in India, on which we cannot look with any measure of complacency. Their presence was, doubtless, to be expected, but their influence is mainly, or wholly, evil.

Thus, for a considerable time the works of Comte were extensively read in India, and some, if not many, professed to accept the tenets of Positivism. One, however, hears little on the subject now.

But for several years past the people who call themselves Theosophists have been bustling and loquacious—most eager to be accepted as interpreters of ancient Indian lore. As they are atheistic, their natural

ally is Buddhism, but (unless our memory fails us) they assert that esoteric Buddhism esoteric Hinduism and esoteric Zoroastrianism all coincide¹—a proposition that manifests gross ignorance on the part of those who advance it. A lady—Madame Blavatsky—was the moving spirit in this school but she professed to be in communication with certain Mahatmas—personages residing on the Himalaya mountains possessed of much occult science and various astonishing endowments. These gentlemen in addition to ordinary bodies rejoice in astral ones (the nature of which we cannot explain) and in these they reveal themselves in very amazing ways to those who believe in them and Madame Blavatsky. We have read a great many numbers of the organ of this sect *The Theosophist* but there is much in it which we do not profess to understand. One thing alone was plain—that the lady and her coadjutor Colonel Olcott had determined to oppose in every possible way the victorious march of Christianity in India. It soon seemed however, as if the whole thing had collapsed. Another lady who was associated with Madame Blavatsky came forward and publicly declared that the letters and appearances (astral bodies and all) of the so called Mahatmas were an imposture from first to last. As one reads the evidence the feeling of indignation is quenched only in a sense of the infinitely ludicrous character of the whole exhibition. Can such things be in this scientific nineteenth century of ours? For not a few believed and some still believe in the

¹ So it was certainly affirmed in *The Theosophist*

lady and her Himalayan sages But, as Pascal said, *Les incrédules les plus crédules*¹

To add to the terrible confusion of Indian thought, books inculcating decidedly atheistic principles are largely circulated There has been for years an atheistic propaganda, chiefly in Britain, which supplies such publications as Mr Bradlaugh's to Indian students² Of course Christians and Brahmos make common cause against such offensive productions

Such, then, is the strange conflict of opinion which we now witness in India It has often been noticed that there is a remarkable similarity between the state of religious belief in the Roman Empire in the first and second centuries of the Christian era, and what exists in India at the present day There is doubtless a striking similarity, yet there is also a dissimilarity For one thing, the obstacles to the spread of Christianity in India seem decidedly greater than they were in ancient Greece and Rome

The population of India is more than double that of the Roman Empire In Greece and Rome there were no books holding the position which is assigned to the *Sastras* In India religion is made to consist of an infinite number of minute observances Au-

¹ In exposing this amazing folly, and worse than folly, the *Christian College Magazine* of Madras did important service

² So also in Japan It was a remarkable and touching thing to be asked, as we were, by a Japanese theologian, whether it was not possible for Christians and Buddhists to unite in an effort to repel the evil principles inculcated by books sent from Britain and America He belonged to the Shin-shu sect, which has exalted Amida Buddha to the rank of Deity

thority and ceremonialism have combined to crush the religious consciousness. Caste is all but omnipotent. The soul is in fetters. There is no individuality in India. Farther foolish and evil as much of ancient Paganism was, it was not so wicked or so childish as modern Hinduism.

In the Empire a period of scepticism had been followed by a reaction to superstition which is traceable at least from the time of Augustus. Eastern and Western beliefs then became strangely mingled together, the blending which Keshub Chunder Sen in his later days so earnestly contended for was begun. But the great fusion of creeds soon threatened to turn out a great confusion which only enhanced the distress of truth seeking souls.

Christianity had arisen and was slowly advancing, not in rural districts so much as in cities. In India the advance of Christianity is witnessed both in cities and in rural districts—rather more in the latter. Judaism also as we have seen was spread throughout the Empire and was to some extent the forerunner of the Gospel. In India the Gospel is its own forerunner—that is to say the great truths of natural religion which it republishes are widely accepted, even while its distinctive doctrines are still repelled. This is like the dawn preceding and heralding the sunrise.

One important point of difference between the ancient Empire and India is the extent to which education is carried—or likely to be carried—in the latter. Education in its higher branches is entirely subversive of Hinduism. As conducted in schools directly

connected with Government, it exercises on belief an influence almost simply destructive. One must watch with anxiety the extension of purely secular instruction over India. Still, an infidel *nation* is hardly conceivable, and Christianity must, ere long, come in to fill the intolerable void. A national system of education will involve, sooner or later, a national renunciation of Hinduism.

Should infidelity spread widely in Europe, it is certain that the conversion of India will be indefinitely delayed. But the signs of the times do not seem to us to betoken the triumph of unbelief in the West. Is there any real conflict now between religion and science? We think not. And certainly the missionary spirit, which is essentially a spirit of faith and love, is continually deepening in Europe and America, and it will tell more powerfully every year on the worn-out religions of the East.

We are very far from affirming that such systems as Brahmanism and Mohammadanism will soon have wholly perished. In Europe the final triumph of the Gospel came after a struggle of centuries, and it may be so in India. Yet, on the other hand, the Hindus are a gregarious people, and they may, ere long, begin to move in masses into the Christian Church, and probably, the lower classes first.

The case of Japan is in some respects analogous to that of India—though the former is accepting Western thought with more rapidity than the latter. It seems probable that Japan may soon profess itself a Christian nation. Such a revolution would deeply

impress the minds of all educated men and accelerate the advent of a similar change in India.

The last great attempt—apart from persecution—to arrest the onward march of the Gospel in early days, was made by the Neo-platonists—Plotinus, Porphyry and others. In several respects this school resembled the Brahmo Samaj. Its philosophy tended more and more to be a vast eclecticism—or rather syncretism—in which the tenets of nearly all religious and believing schools were run into one crude mass. The reaction from a chilling scepticism (which was itself a reaction from its opposite) carried them very far into superstition. Philosophers began to talk of ecstasies and raptures and the felt yet visible presence of Deity. In opposition to the Christian Church they excoagitated a catholic church of philosophy speaking much of a golden chain of sages who had all taught the same pure theology. How like is all this to Mr. Sen's attempt to reconcile all systems of belief! We must not indeed overlook one point of difference. The Neo-platonists ignored Christ as far as possible. The New Dispensation has not done so though it too much projects a Christ of its own devising. But in other respects the parallel is striking and instructive. Neo-platonism failed as the success

It is also quite possible that the expectation of the Japanese Christians regarding India may yet be fulfilled—they may send missionaries to help in its evangelization. Tell the people of India they said when we were among them some year ago to become Christians without delay. If they do not we must go and persuade them. They sent us Juddhism. We shall more than repay the obligation. We shall give them gold for brass—the pure doctrine of Christ for the mixed teachings of Sakhyā Muni.

sive forms of Gnosticism had failed, and the march of the Gospel was ever steadily onward. Even so, the Biahmo Somaj, in all its forms, must fail. God forbid that we should say this boastfully, or as if it were only one school of human thought vanquishing another! We know full well the exceeding reluctance of India to adopt foreign systems of belief, and the pride she takes in her own ancient sages. Well, we do not ask her to submit to the reasonings of men, but we do beseech her to listen to the message of love and reconciliation which Christ has brought from heaven. And when she has done so oh! then let the heavens rejoice and let the earth be glad for a new day will have dawned both on India and the world. And that thrice blessed consummation may not be so far off as many say it is.

CHAPTER XV

HINDUISM COMPARED WITH CHRISTIANITY

IN the preceding pages we have had occasion from time to time to draw a contrast between the Hindu *Sastras* and the Bible and the difference between these two books must not unfrequently have suggested it self to the reader even when no express comparison was made. But it is right to consider this important topic at greater length.

The first thing that strikes us is the difference in the size of the books. The Bible is composed of about forty different compositions but is not a large work. The *Sastras* though much smaller than the authoritative Scriptures of the Puddhists are yet exceedingly voluminous. Many of them are written in a style which even educated men find very difficult to understand and if they have to be studied in the original only a very small part of them can possibly be mastered by one man.

The component parts of the *Sastras* are in some respects, not unlike the component parts of the Bible. Prose and verse are found alike in the Hindu and Christian books. Hymns as the expression of devotional sentiment abound in both scriptures.

Ritual to regulate worship, and political and social laws, form an important part of the Sastras and also of the Hebrew Scriptures

So far, in the form of composition, there is a resemblance between the books. But the diversities are immense. Science is largely introduced, and authoritatively taught, in many of the Sastras, while it is most sparingly introduced, and never authoritatively taught, in the Bible. Then, history, except in the form of wild poetic legends, is absent from the Sastras. So is prophecy almost wholly so in its predictive form. There is, farther, nothing in the Sastras corresponding to the epistolary portions of the New Testament.

It is interesting to observe that both Hinduism and Christianity can historically be divided each into two great periods. The rise of Buddhism was a great cataclysm in the history of Hinduism, and the system that was constructed on the fall of Buddhism was widely different from the more ancient faith. So the religion presented in the Old Testament is, in several respects, different from the Christianity of the New Testament. We believe, then, that we ought to compare ancient Hinduism with the faith unfolded in the Old Testament, and then contrast modern Hinduism with Christianity. We do this, in order that we may be thoroughly just to Hinduism, since, for example, it would not be fair to compare Vedic conceptions with those of the New Testament, which were expressed a thousand years or so later. Yet let it be remembered that, on the part of a Christian controversialist, this concession is exceedingly large,

inasmuch as to an orthodox Hindu the Veda contains the supreme Revelation authoritative in all ages, whereas the Christian believes in a progressive Revelation in which the earlier part is related to the later as the flower bud to the expanded flower.

We have seen that modern Hinduism differs widely from the ancient faith. But in the ancient faith itself there was no unity. It grew both by development from within and by the accretion of foreign elements from without. We have spoken above of the startling contrast between the first and fourth Vedas. But even in the *Rig Veda* —the oldest and best—there is no consistency. We have in one place something like monotheism, in another the germ of pantheism, in a third polytheism. The *Upanishads* which are associated with the *Hymns* contradict each other, but with a strong tendency to pantheism, which differentiates them from the earlier writings. Gods went on multiplying with time, some wholly unknown in the Veda assumed a high position, others were degraded or even wholly disappeared. Institutions changed, thus idol worship and caste which were unknown at first became universal.

On the contrary, though there was growth in knowledge, one form of religious belief pervades the whole Old Testament from Genesis to Malachi. Men of the most varied ranks—from kings to herdsmen—and during the long period of a thousand years—give utterance to the same high thoughts regarding things spiritual and divine. The Bible is not a collection of units, it is one—an organic whole. The first verse of ~~Genesis~~ expresses a grand conception which was

also the belief of the latest of the prophets 'In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth' Progress, development, there was, but never by the absorption of foreign and incongruous elements Event succeeded event, each full of instruction, prophet succeeded prophet, clearer light was shed on the Divine character and government, the mind of the people was educated,—but the old belief was never cast aside—it was only more fully appreciated and more firmly held Clearly this wonderful unity is a convincing evidence that the Old Testament is of Divine inspiration

The one form of religious thought to which we have been alluding is the strongest, strictest monotheism. Polytheism is now, to any educated mind, an impossible belief, but the monotheism of the nineteenth century is not more absolute than that maintained by Moses or Abraham, fifteen hundred or two thousand years before the Christian era

Again with regard to the character of God The deities in the *Sastias* are *immoral* often *immoral* Even in the *Vedas* they are so the only deity to whom moral excellence is ascribed being Varuna, and, as time went on, the gods became worse and worse They demand homage, when that is given, they support their votaries through right and wrong On the contrary, the God of the Hebrew Scriptures is pure—thrice holy, He is as much opposed to evil as light is to darkness Power, wisdom, and goodness belong to Him in an infinite degree Being holy, He demands holiness in His worshippers He demands 'truth in the inward parts', and outward homage, when the heart is impure is a grievous offence.

In the Vedic religion there was at first no image worship, but in the course of generations it became more firmly rooted among the Hindus than perhaps in any other nation. Scattered over India there are probably a full thousand millions of idols. In form the divinities are often monstrous—in this very different from the gods of ancient Greece. Mr. Muller somewhere speaks of the hidden wisdom of the second commandment. History testifies that there is at least in all earlier stages of religious thought a strong tendency to *externalize* religion and to surround it with symbols which in common minds, soon usurp the place of the thing signified. The idolatry of India easily runs into the grossest fetishism—than which there can be nothing more debasing to the human mind. Now few things in the Hebrew Scriptures are more remarkable than their perpetual stern denunciations of idolatry. Most wisely and not too vehemently did the ancient prophets thunder against the worship of images. The Jewish people like other nations were long prone to yield to the sweet seduction of idolatry but the scathing denunciations of the prophets and also the strict discipline through which Divine Providence made them pass at length converted them into a nation of earnest monotheists.

What we have said of discipline reminds us of another important difference between Hinduism and Judaism. The expression *God in history* is full of significance. God reveals Himself in providence as well as in the works of creation and few subjects are more deserving of study than what is called the

philosophy of history' Now, the Vedas and Upanishads contain no history, and the same thing holds true of the philosophical books. They express *thoughts*, not *facts*. In the Epic poems and Puranas what is put forward as history stands self-convicted as the lawless product of imagination. But how different is the Bible! Dean Stanley has justly said that 'Christianity alone of all religions claims to be founded not on fancy or feeling, but on fact and truth'. In the Bible there stands recorded a long and lofty succession of *events, facts*, and these fitted to convey the most important lessons regarding the Divine character and will. If the historical details were struck out of the Bible, the loss would be infinite. Deeds are often more significant than words. Accordingly, we find that the events recorded in the earlier part of the Bible made a most profound impression on the mind of the Israelites, not only at the time, but during after ages. And they are full of instruction still.

We have seen how Sacerdotalism, from exceedingly small beginnings, gradually shot up in India into rank luxuriance, and became a veritable Upas tree, distilling poison. Nothing of this kind ever occurred in Judaism. The priest held a place of honour, but could not act the tyrant over the bodies or consciences of men. Had the priests remained the only religious instructors of the people, this would have been an almost necessary result, and farther, religion would have consisted mainly in external things—rites and ceremonies. But in Israel the order of prophets perpetually recalled the people to the inner soul.

of religion—asking What doth the Lord require of thee but to do justice to love mercy and to walk humbly with thy God? The functions of the prophetic order were thus of immense importance both for individuals and for the community Milton affirms of the prophetic writings—

In them is plainest taught and easiest learnt
What makes a nation happy and keeps it so
What ruins kingdoms and lays cities flat

But in speaking of the prophets we can by no means overlook the importance of their *predictions* The Bible speaks of past, present and *future* The character of the references to futurity is truly remarkable While the prophets perpetually threaten sinful men and sinful nations with chastisement from the hand of God they delight to dwell on the future with exulting hope They disclose a Divine purpose—a purpose of mercy formed before the foundations of the world were laid, running through the ages and steadily advancing towards a glorious consummation Even when, to all human appearance the cause of God and the cause of man seemed lost the prophets of Israel never despaired of the future of the world All would come right at last Heavens high decree should stand in spite of the rage of Gods enemies and the heart of the long sinful earth should beat at last in full unison with the heart of heaven Implicitly the Bible is the book of hope In this it is entirely unlike the Hindu books They are marked by a despondency ever ready to darken into despair At present the Kali Yuga is advancing and the world is plunging deeper and deeper into ignorance,

vice, and misery. The patriot may die for his country, the martyr for his God, but their doings and sufferings are of no avail to stem the tide of evil. True, after æons of misery, the Age of Truth comes back, but it does so only to pass away again, and torment us with the memory of lost purity and peace. The experience of the world is thus an eternal renovation of hope and of disappointment. Progress towards abiding good there is none. The whole conception which Hinduism forms of human life is overwhelmingly sad. Hope for ourselves, and effort for the good of others, are rendered impossible.

The summary of duty contained in the Decalogue, as has often been observed, is singularly brief, clear, and comprehensive. There is no summary in the *Sastras* at all corresponding with it.

The rest of the Sabbath can be proved, on physiological grounds, to be needful both for man and beast. Politically, too—as Adam Smith has expressed it—it is ‘of inestimable value.’ Its spiritual value is equally inestimable, as producing a break amidst the engrossing avocations of life, and affording time for calm reflection and the undisturbed worship of God. But in Hinduism there is no such institution. Rest to man and beast comes irregularly, at one time there is too much of it, and at another too little.

It would be very instructive to compare throughout the legislation of Manu with that of Moses. We can notice only some outstanding points. One of the most prominent things in Manu is the place assigned to caste. Some men are held to be essentially, and in virtue of their blood, pure, others are

neither pure nor impure others are essentially and in virtue of their blood impure The idea of the dignity of man as man would have been scouted by Manu as utterly ridiculous¹

One becomes sick at heart when he thinks of what caste has done and is doing Even politically it is a curse It goes on multiplying divisions men of the same caste if from different localities will not eat with each other Society splits and splits All feeling of brotherhood is destroyed that of morality is also destroyed and if the Hindus are ever to become one nation they must first cast off Hinduism

On the contrary the Hebrew legislation recognized nothing resembling caste All Israelites were brethren—all equally children of Abraham as Jehovah had said of Israel as a whole without exception Israel is My son even My first born Such a thought ennobled a man, even the poorest man—

coelumque tueri

Jussit et erecto ad sidera tollere vultus

It seems to us a truly remarkable fact that Jewish legislation never warranted the use of torture It has been allowed in perhaps all other codes of law—and in most until of late—as a means of extracting evidence and punishing crime Whence this superiority of Judaism? Were the Jews humane above other races? No but their legislation was divine

¹ The frightful extent to which the idea of birth pollution is carried by Brahmanism came fully under our notice in Southern India Some high caste men said to the lowest classes We who are men cannot endure the presence of such impure wretches as you Do you think the god will allow you to approach them? They will kill you if you do You had better make the best terms you can with the devils and worship them

We do not assert that the Mosaic institutions were intended for all stages of advancement but for a society like that which existed in ancient Palestine they seem the wisest possible. The Jews were occupied partly with agricultural, partly with pastoral, pursuits. The land was divided among the families according to their size, and it could not be permanently alienated from its possessors. Ownership and occupation of land generally went together, the evils of absentee landlordism were unknown. Extreme wealth on the one hand and pauperism on the other were as far as possible guarded against. The poor were few, and were sufficiently cared for. Millionaires and 'lapsed masses' seem to have been equally unknown. Various perplexing questions regarding land-tenure which are hotly discussed in the present day, were solved, or superseded, in ancient Israel. Michaelis and other writers have shown that, viewed even as sanitary and police regulations, the Mosaic institutions were full of wisdom, and the question has been repeatedly asked whether the remarkable longevity of the Jews is not dependent on the extent to which they are still able to carry out these requirements.

In the various matters now mentioned Hindu legislation was immensely inferior to the Hebrew.

It has been noticed that the position of women in India, which was originally somewhat honourable, became more and more degraded as time went on. Gradually there came in such dreadful institutions as the burning of widows, the prohibition of the marriage of widows, and their cruel treatment.

child marriages—polygamy—the practice of Kulin Brahmans in Bengal marrying fifty or a hundred wives. There is nothing in Hindu law rendering polygamy—even such polygamy—illegal¹. Nowhere have the rights of women been more disregarded than in India. The true idea of the family is almost destroyed.

It was not so in Israel. Woman occupied from the first a place of respect which she never lost. The pictures which are given of family life are exceedingly attractive. The wife was honoured. The heart of her husband doth safely trust her. In her tongue is the law of kindness—such a description rises to the highest ideal of domestic love and happiness.

It is true that polygamy was in certain circumstances allowed though not approved, and so was divorce. Evidently customs already existing had in certain circumstances—and to prevent worse evils—to be retained. The Mosiac institutions were disciplinary—intended to elevate and fit a people whose souls had been debased by slavery to become the true worshippers of the living God.

The ceremonial systems both of ancient Hinduism and Judaism were complex though that of the former was especially so. We do not find fault with this in Hinduism any more than in Judaism. Positive precepts (which rest simply on authority) seem indispensable for the rousing of conscience at a certain stage of society, and that they should be at first intermingled with moral precepts need cause us no surprise. The distinction of animals and meats into

¹ H. Cowell's *Lectures on Hindu Law* p. 164.

clean and unclean appears to be very ancient. In Painsism, for example, certain animals are pure, as being made by Ahuramazda, certain others are impure, as being the work of Ahuman (Angio-mainyus), the Evil Power. No such idea as this ever appears in the Bible. According to Hinduism, certain animals, particularly the cow and the monkey, are sacred, certain other creatures are by nature unholy. The distinction of clean and unclean in Judaism was not based on any such ground as this, when feelings of natural repugnance or sanitary ideas did not rule the distinction rested on the Divine command. It served to keep conscience on the alert and test obedience, until the time should come when it could safely be laid aside.

There are some remarkable similarities in the view of Sacrifice taken by both the Hindu and Jewish systems. In both it occupies a very important place, and in both its origin is referred to primeval times.

But the dissimilarities are very great. Human sacrifice existed in Vedic days—though rarely practised except at great sacrifices (p. 42, note). Among the Hebrews it was sternly prohibited, and they were solemnly warned against being seduced into the commission of the dreadful rite by its frequent occurrence among the surrounding nations.

Animal sacrifice gradually attained a prominence among the Hindus far greater than among the Hebrews, everything in heaven and earth was held to be affected by it. It was believed to be mighty *per se*, it had no typical meaning. Then, after it had risen to colossal dimensions, it was gradually

undermined by philosophic speculation and finally overturned by Buddhism. It perished being held to be not only unmeaning, but wicked and absurd. Nor has it revived in orthodox Hinduism for the sacrifices that are still frequently offered in connexion with Kali and other goddesses are not survivals of Vedic worship but corruptions borrowed from the sanguinary aboriginal systems of demonolatry.

In Judaism sacrifice was intended to sanctify to the cleanness of the flesh¹—that is it removed ceremonial defilement and restored a man to the privileges of citizenship in Israel. But farther it was typical—prophetic of the great offering of Jesus Christ—a picture so far as any picture could be given of the sublimest event in all history—the self sacrifice of the Son of God. This is not an interpretation forced on Jewish sacrifices by Christian writers—the typical import of sacrifice did actually develop itself in the heart of Judaism without any New Testament influence. The cessation of sacrifice in Christianity thus implied nothing wrong in its past existence—on the contrary it implied its utility and even necessity for the time—but when the prophesied event took place the prophecy necessarily ceased. The type was useless when the great Antitype had come.

But it is time to speak of Hinduism as contrasted with the fully developed faith presented in the New Testament.

Were we to compare the New Testament only with

¹ So the Revised Version.

Kurtz on *The Sacrificial Worship of the Old Testament* p. 121 (Clark Theological Library)

the Puranas, we should be selecting for criticism the weakest part of Hinduism. Let us, therefore, take into account the Hindu Sastras generally—only excluding the abominable Tantras.

Much that has been already said regarding the Old Testament applies with equal force to the New, for example, there is the perfect harmony that reigns through all its parts. Nor is it only consistent with itself, it is equally so with the Old Testament, the two Testaments form a whole—a perfect unity. On the contrary, the Puranas are for the most part intensely sectarian, one denounces beliefs and rites which another enjoins. The Puranas thus make the great confusion we have already spoken of still worse confounded.

Again, as into the Old Testament so into the New, history largely enters. And what a history! The life, and death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ—these chiefly. If the facts recorded in connexion with these things are true—and that they are so we must now assume—then they are infinitely the most stupendous, the most glorious, events which this earth has witnessed. If it were possible to prove them false, how would the universe be impoverished!

One of the most important points in later Hinduism is the doctrine of the Avatars—the ‘descents’ to earth of the divinity Vishnu. When we turn to contrast with these the Christian doctrine of the Incarnation, we almost feel rebuked, as if guilty of profanation. We need not repeat the Hindu teaching regarding the Avatars,—oh, how has it sullied and defiled the great conception from which it probably arose—that

of man requiring the presence and help of Heaven! Even when the doctrine rises to its greatest height—which it does in the Gita—it affirms that Vishnu is periodically born to 'rescue the good and destroy the evil.' It is enough as a contrast to remind our readers that Christ came from heaven to earth to seek and save that which was lost. The idea of man seeking God is not foreign to Hinduism, but it knows nothing of God seeking man—seeking fallen man pitying him and restoring him.

We might say much of the teachings of Christ but we forbear. Men who are far from orthodox Christianity have spoken with eloquence and high admiration of the Sermon on the Mount. His parables and all His doctrine, and they have affirmed that there is no probability of any future age hearing purer and loftier thoughts expressed. We therefore pass on.

Christ not only spoke the truth. He lived it. He exemplified in act what He taught in words.

He wrought
With human hand the creed of creed
In loveliness of perfect deed
More strong than all poetic thought

There is a most beautiful commingling in His character of the stronger and the softer virtues: fortitude above heroic reconciled with a tenderness more than motherly. And far more than this: self-denial and self-sacrifice—for God for man for truth—this we all regard as the highest reach of the human spirit as the blossom and fragrantcy of created excellence, and there are names in history—that of the martyr dying

for his God, or the mother, it may be, dying for her children—on which ‘attend the tears and praises of all time’ But, after all, what is the highest and holiest exhibition of such heroic goodness but a dim and distant reflection of the self-emptying and self-sacrifice of the Son of God?

It would be easy to quote from many writers of the most ‘liberal’ schools of thought the strongest possible declarations regarding the matchless excellence of Christ’s character, and the immense influence which it has exerted, and must exert, on the human race Let one testimony suffice ‘It was reserved for Christianity to present to the world an ideal character which, through all the changes of eighteen centuries, has inspired the hearts of men with an impassioned love, and has shown itself capable of acting on all ages nations, temperaments, and conditions, has not only been the highest pattern of virtue, but the highest incentive to its practice, and has exercised so deep an influence that it may be truly said that the simple record of three short years of active life has done more to regenerate and soften mankind than all the disquisitions of philosophers and all the exhortations of moralists¹’

We therefore cannot force ourselves to contrast the Incarnation of Christ with the so-called Hindu incarnations in which the divinity successively takes the form of a fish, a tortoise, a boar, a man-lion, a dwarf, a destroyer, a warrior, a licentious cow-herd, and an arch-deceiver ‘When we turn from such

¹ Lecky, *History of European Morals*, ii 8

representations to the 'Word made flesh' we seem to have escaped from the pestilential air of a charnel house to the sweet pure breath of heaven¹

It is important to remark that, among the Hindu sages also whose doings are recorded, there is not one who could be taken as a pattern of conduct. Nearly all of them were guilty of flagitious deeds; most of them were excessively irritable—ready to pour out curses on any one god or man who crossed their imperious will. If then example is better than precept it will easily be seen how sorrowfully poor is the Hindu.

No question is more important than that of the mode in which a religion deals with the great fact of Sin. So far as our experience goes every sin is ascribed by the Hindus to the Divine Being as its ultimate cause. This dreadful blasphemy destroys all sense of personal demerit or at least renders it exceedingly slight. Where it exists the idea of sin seldom rises above that of ceremonial impurity which ceremonial cleansing can fully remove. What a contrast between this shadowy conception and the Christian doctrine of sin! Of evil is wholly opposed to the Divine character, is a violation of Eternal Right, is hateful to God, and is poisonous to the human soul: the Hindu *Śāstras* speak not. Of the majesty of conscience as the vicegerent of God—which the philosopher Kant links to the awful magnificence of the starry heavens—they also speak not: nor have they any conception of the magnitude of the evil.

¹ *Hinduism: a Sketch and a Contrast* p. 53. (In the series of Recent Day Tracts.)

strophe when conscience, like a dethroned monarch, is chained and blinded by evil, rebellious passions

And having no right sense of the character of sin, the Sastrias fail to recognize either the difficulty or the preciousness of pardon. They indeed speak of atonement—yes, of many atonements. But what is a Hindu atonement? Some paltry device such as we have mentioned above—such as pilgrimage, washing in a sacred stream, feeding Brahmins, or gazing on an idol and passionately praising it. Such things leave no impression on the heart as to the character or desert of sin.

And when these miserable 'atonements' fail, then there really is no pardon. Indeed, the doctrine of transmigration implies that there is no forgiveness with God, and that the transgressor must himself drink to the lowest dregs the cup of bitterness which he has filled. Oh, when conscience is really awake, and evil is seen in its true character, with what a rapture of relief does the sinner turn to the Christian Scriptures and their revelation of the great atoning sacrifice of Christ! Christ was more than a Teacher, and an Example, and a Martyr. 'His blood cleanseth from all sin.' He was a Saviour. The Cross, steadily gazed upon, fills the human spirit at once with contrition, and hatred of sin, and overflowing joy. The love of God in Christ in Christ the crucified when once apprehended, cleaves the hard heart in twain, and summons forth the far-down streams of penitence and love. Love is love's recompense. We love Him because He first loved us. True love compels obedience—it delights to obey.

We live to Him who died for us. The atonement made by Jesus Christ for sin is the divinest revelation of Divinity, a manifestation of the highest perfections of the Eternal Mind in their highest exercise.

And the redemption wrought for man implies not only pardon but spiritual renovation—deliverance from the power as well as from the punishment of sin. Assuredly the former is not a less precious blessing than the latter—one might almost call it more precious.

It is interesting to compare Christianity and Hinduism in regard to their practical power in purifying and elevating human nature.

We cannot expect much from Hinduism. Not one of the Hindu deities is morally pure. The Vedic conception of the august and pure Varuna the god of heaven has ages ago faded away and no one—certainly not the One and All of Pantheistic Vedantism—has occupied his place. Now it is a widely accepted maxim that the deity and devotee are like each other¹. But to imitate the Hindu gods is to sully and debase the soul of man.

We fully and gladly admit that many good maxims and precepts are scattered through the multitudinous Hindu books as they are in Greek and Roman writings. We do not stay to consider how far these are overbalanced by statements of a different character but meanwhile let us attend only to the best of them. These occasionally rise to the height of the teachings of Confucius, some may rank with those

¹ Summa religio is est imitari quem colis.—CICERO. P ligosi-
simon est cultus imitari.—LACTANTIUS. *Yatha d'vastatha bhaktah*—
Sanskrit Proverb.

of Epictetus, Seneca, or Marcus Aurelius, a few are similar to ethical precepts of the Bible

But unhappily the knowledge of duty does not ensure its performance, and the saying has become proverbial—

‘ Video meliora proboque,
Deteriora sequor ’

So much as regards the individual soul. It seems needless to speak of the influence of Hinduism on society. The dreadful doctrine of Caste its most characteristic feature is ruinous to social well-being. Equally, or almost equally, pernicious is the doctrine regarding women generally and widows in particular.

These things being so, the reader may ask how everything does not go to wreck and ruin. The truth is, the people are better than their religion. Out of the immense chaos called Hinduism they extract certain portions, the better-minded extract the better portions, and to a large extent forget the rest. The instincts of the human heart are higher and truer than the teachings of the religion. Thus, when the vile tales about gods and goddesses, which abound in nearly all the later books, would sweep the mind of woman into ruin, her infant's smile restores her to her better self. Domestic life is thus, so far, preserved, and while that anchor holds, society will not strike upon the rocks that stand so perilously near.

There is no doctrine in Hinduism akin to that of the Holy Spirit, the Sanctifier. The poor Hindu, when perchance he seeks to rise above temptation, does not know, as the Christian does, that a hand from

above is stretched out to support and guide his tottering steps and help him onward and upward. But how profound is the wisdom of the apostle's words: 'Sin shall not have dominion over you for you are not under the law [with mere precepts, promises and threats] but under grace. The perfection of the individual, and through that the perfection of society is the Christian ideal. Christ taught His disciples thus to pray: Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be Thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done on earth as it is done in heaven. The Christian waits in fullness of expectation and continually strives for the realization of this magnificent ideal. It may not come soon but it will come. As for himself he looks forward to death without fear. To him it is a quiet sleep and the resurrection draws nigh. Then glorified in soul and body, the companion of angels and saints strong in immortal youth he will serve without let or hindrance the God and Saviour whom he loves.

How different from this sublime hope is the belief of the Hindu! His great effort—if he has embraced the Vedānta philosophy—is to persuade himself that he is even at present identified with Brahman and will by and by get rid of all conscious existence. The expectation of the ordinary man is that after passing through almost innumerable births—an expectation which is terrific to the Hindu—the soul like a drop of water mingling with the ocean will be absorbed or swallowed up and lost in the One the immeasurable All.

Again one of the greatest facts in man's experience is suffering. Hinduism acknowledges this and gives

as we have seen, a strongly pessimistic view of human life. It affirms all suffering to be penal. Many an innocent sufferer has the trials of life fearfully enhanced by this belief¹. And when death comes to tear from their embrace those whom they love, they sorrow as those 'who have no hope'. Tell the mother who is clinging desperately to the body of her dead child, refusing to part with it, that there is another world in which she may hope to meet that child again, and she will think you are adding mockery to her woe. No, her belief is this: parted once, parted for ever, no reunion is possible. But when the Christian commits his loved ones to the dust, he does so in the full assurance that 'those who sleep in Jesus will God bring with Him'. He calmly waits for a blessed resurrection.

Even so, amid the varied trials of life, Hinduism can supply no comfort. Since all suffering is held to be the just award of sin committed in a former life, divine sympathy with the bruised and bleeding heart there is none. Alas for the sorrowing Hindu! The Christian turns to that blessed Being who 'Himself took our infirmities and bare our sicknesses'—whose invitation—entreaty rather and command was, and is, this: 'Come unto Me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest'. What marvellous words! Yet innumerable breaking hearts have put them to the test, and found them true, for still,

¹ For example, young widows (so called, though many of them were never wives), who are subjected to dreadful oppression by Hindu law, often torture themselves with the fear of having committed some horrible offence in a previous birth. Otherwise, they ask, how could they be made so miserable?

even in the heaven of glory He is 'touched with a feeling of all our infirmities

Of the enthusiasm of humanity —the holy passion of philanthropy—Hinduism can of course know nothing Its theology declares that good works as well as bad works hinder a man's final salvation Apathy cessation from all action is the natural result Christianity exhorts man to action 'Show me it says, thy faith by thy works The Christian is to be a worker for God—a fellow worker with God Hence when true to his faith he continually strives to teach the ignorant comfort the sorrowful and recall the erring to God and goodness The Christian scorns not the meanest and despairs not regarding the vilest of the human race Every erring soul is precious and must be lovingly and perseveringly dealt with if haply it will turn to God and live

These remarks are lengthening out too much and we touch with a rapid pen what yet remains

There are striking declarations in the Bible regarding the connexion between Christ and His true followers This is represented as far more than communion it is actual union He is in them they are in Him He is the Vine they are the branches He is the Head of the body they are the members The union is generally expressed in figurative language but it is nevertheless a fact

I live said the Apostle Paul, yet not I Christ liveth in me We cannot attempt an explanation here of this wonderful union We content ourselves with noting that there is no conception in the *Sastras* which at all resembles it Both philosophical and

religious teaching in India often refer to connexion between the deity and the worshipper, but it is not a union of spirit with spirit which they assert, but a complete identification of the divine and human, pantheism in the very strictest sense

We have not in Hinduism any doctrine which resembles the grand conception of the Church whether the Church visible, or the Church invisible. Nor have we anything like the sublime doctrine of the indwelling of the Holy Spirit in the individual members, and in the united body of believers

We have had occasion to speak of caste—which is a main characteristic of Hinduism in terms of strong reprobation. It is utterly foreign to Christianity. We saw above how the Old Testament inculcated a feeling of brotherhood which should link Israelite to Israelite, and, so far as the selfish passions of the human heart allowed, make the nation one great family. In the New Testament the view is widened, and the family is to consist of all believing men of all nations. ‘In Christ there is neither Greek nor Jew, Barbarian, Scythian, bond nor free, neither male nor female.’ All believers are equal in the Father’s sight,

all are brethren. Nay, the feeling must overpass the limits of the professing Church, we are commanded to ‘add to brotherly kindness, charity’ that is, a love co extensive with the human race. What is, if possible, more remarkable still, Christians are commanded to ‘honour all men.’ Respect must be paid to man as man, and, while we mourn over the fall of those who have surrendered themselves to evil, we must earnestly and hopefully labour for their recovery

We have been speaking of the great moral blemishes of Hinduism. Of less importance but still notable enough is its opposition to scientific truth. The Sastras do not refer to science incidentally they formally teach it—that is they communicate as authoritatively revealed from heaven such science as existed at the times in which they were written. And so doing they go continually astray¹

The Christian Scriptures as we have mentioned, come—if they ever do come—on scientific questions only incidentally they never authoritatively state them. Their reticence is truly remarkable. All other writers of the first century blunder perpetually in questions of science. Josephus the Jewish historian Greek and Roman authors and the Christian Fathers all introduce scientific matter and necessarily go wrong. Thus makes the silence of the New Testament the more remarkable and significant.

Nor is it only on matters of science that this majestic silence is maintained. Even in connexion with religion there are many questions that the Hindu Sastras largely discuss on which Christianity preserves an exceeding reticence. Her silence is eloquent. Whatever bears on man's necessities and

Thus in astronomy the planets are said to be nine in number. The sun is one of them and Pahu and I etu (the ascending and descending nodes) are also planets and cause eclipses by swallowing the sun and moon. The sun is nearer us than the moon. In the works called Siddhantas a different system of astronomy is taught but it is the Ptolemaic not the Copernican. We must not waste time by detailing the geography. It represents the world as composed of seven concentric island or continents which are surrounded by as many oceans consisting respectively of wine clarified butter milk fresh water &c.

duties is inscribed in characters of light on the pages of the Bible, whatever is purely speculative and fitted only to gratify curiosity is carefully withheld. Hinduism revels in physical descriptions of heaven and hell. The Bible plainly states their existence, but does not describe the physical enjoyments of the one or the physical sufferings of the other, and, when it refers to these things, it does so almost exclusively in figurative language.

Finally, one striking feature of the Hindu books is the way in which good and evil are mingled in them. It would be quite possible to make a selection of sentiments from the Sastias which would command respect and even admiration. But, in the original, it happens in cases innumerable that a true thought is linked with falsehood, and a pure sentiment stands side by side with one that is dishonourable or disgusting. Max Muller says he has long tried in vain to explain this strange inconsistency. The learned professor has a much higher idea than we have of 'what India can teach us', but even he confesses that the Sastias contain 'much that is not only unmeaning, artificial, and silly, but even hideous and repellent'.

Of the Christian Scriptures we need only say, in the words of the Psalmist, 'The words of the Lord are pure words as silver tried in a furnace of earth, purified seven times.'

APPENDIX

I HYMNS OF THE VEDA

WE have given various quotations from the Veda but lest it should be said that detached paragraphs give no proper idea of the work it may be well to subjoin an entire hymn. We select the first in the Rig Veda as translated by Prof H H Wilson

The hymn is addressed to Agni or Fire—

- 1 I glorify Agni the high priest of the sacrifice the divine the ministrant who presents the oblation [to the gods] and is the possessor of great wealth
May that Agni who is to be celebrated by both ancient and modern sages conduct the god hither
- 3 Through Agni the worshipper obtains that affluence which increases day by day which is the source of fame and the multiplier of mankind
- 4 Agni the unobstructed sacrifice of which thou art on every side the protector assuredly reaches the gods
- 5 May Agni the presenter of oblations the attainer of knowledge he who is true renowned and divine come hither with the god
- 6 Whatever good thou mayest Agni bestow upon the giver [of the oblation] that verily Angiras shall revert to thee
- 7 We approach thee Agni with reverential homage in our thought daily both morning and evening
- 8 Thee the radiant the protector of sacrifices the constant illuminator of truth increasing in thine own dwelling
- 9 Agni be unto us easy of access as a father is to his son be ever present with us for our good

But as a prose version necessarily gives an imperfect idea of any hymn we subjoin part of a metrical translation of a hymn addressed to the winds (Maruts). The version is Prof Whitney's who follows Roth's metrical version in German with a few slight changes¹—

THE POET SPEAKS

- 1 Upon what course are entered now together
Of common age of common home the Maruts?

¹ *Oriental and Linguistic Studies* p 144

With what desire, and whence, have they come hither?
 The heroes make their whistling heard for long,
 Whose prayers and praises are the youths enjoying?
 Say, who hath turned the Maruts to his offering?
 As they go roving through the air like falcons,
 How shall we stay them with our strong devotion?

THE MARUTS SPEAK

How comes it, Indra, that thou goest lonely,
 Though else so blithe? Tell us what ails thee, master
 Thou'rt wont to talk with us as we go onward,
 Lord of the coursers, what hast thou against us?

INDRA SPEAKS

I love the prayers, the wishes, the libations,
 The odours rise, the Soma press is ready,
 They draw and win me with their invocation,
 My coursers here carry me forward to them

Whereupon the winds offer to go with him, but Indra rather
 testily complains that, though eager to join him in feasting,
 they had let him formerly go forth alone to slay the demon
 But they flatter him, and he expresses pleasure Finally

THE FOUR SPEAK AGAIN

Who hath exalted you like us, ye Maruts?
 As friends go forth to friends, so come ye hither
 Ye bright ones, fan to ardour our devotions,
 Of these my pious labours be ye heedful
 This is your praise, and this your song, O Maruts!
 Made by Māndārā's son, the singer Mānva
 Come hither with refreshment for our strength'ning
 May we win food and meadows rich in water!

Of the poetical merit of such hymns we shall leave the
 reader to form his own opinion. As to their religious
 character, it is evident that they are devoid of all true
 spiritual feeling

II THE GAYATRĪ

The most holy prayer—if prayer it be—occurring in
 the Veda is called the Gāyatṛī. The name is derived from
 the metre in which it is composed. It is thus rendered by
 Prof H H Wilson—

We meditate on that desirable light of the divine Savitrī, who influ-
 ences our pious rites¹

¹ Rig V iii 62 10. It may be well to give the Sanskrit, it reads
 thus—*tat savitū varenyam bhargo devasya dhīmahi dhiyo yo nah
 prachodayāt*

Professor Sir M. Monier Williams translates it—

Let us meditate (or we meditate) on that excellent glory of the divine
Vivifier. May he enlighten (or stimulate) our understandings.

This prayer is repeated by Brahmans many times every morning and evening and also at noon. It can hardly be omitted in any important rite. The Gayatri is a prayer to the sun or rather a meditation on him.

III. THE ATHARVA VEDA

About twenty years ago there was discovered in Kashmir a text of the Atharva Veda which is considerably different from the one hitherto known. It contains a greater mass of matter, liturgical and legendary, and abounds more in charms and incantations. Dr. Roth holds that this is very probably the genuine text of the Atharvan, and that the shorter text is only an expurgated edition of the original. If the opinion of this distinguished scholar be correct—and that it is so can hardly be matter of doubt—then still stronger expressions of censure are required than those which we have used in our references to the poor low magical character of the fourth Veda.¹

IV. THE UPANISHADS

We submit one or two specimens of these compositions. We select from the Chândogya Upanishad a very celebrated passage beginning with the text which Keshub Chunder Sen continually quoted as teaching monotheism. This was assuredly a mistake. It asserts absolute pantheism—

In the beginning my dear, there was that only which is one only without a second. Others say in the beginning there was that only which is not one only without a second, and from that which is not that which is was born.

But how could it be thus, my dear? the father continued. How could that which is be born of that which is not? No, my dear, only that which is was in the beginning, one only without a second.

It thought, may I be many—may I grow forth. It sent forth fire. The fire thought, may I be many, may I grow forth. It sent forth water. And therefore whenever anywhere is hot and perspires, water is produced on him from fire alone.

¹ See the *Report of the Commission Internationale de la Orientaliste* Firenze 1878 p. 89.

‘Water thought, may I be many, may I grow forth. It sent forth earth (food). Therefore, whenever it rains anywhere, most food is then produced. From water alone is eatable fruit produced!’

But let us select a portion of an Upanishad which has been rendered into verse. We take Sir M Monier Williams’s rendering of part of the important Īśa Upanishad—

Whatever exists within this universe
Is all to be regarded as enveloped
By the great Lord, as if wrapped in a vesture
There is one only being who exists,
Unmoved, yet moving swifter than the mind
Who far outstrips the senses, though as gods
They strive to reach him, who, himself at rest
Transcends the fleetest flight of other beings,
Who, like the air, supports all vital action
He moves, yet moves not, he is far, yet near

(It would be more literal to substitute in these lines *it* for *he* and *him*, and *which* for *who*.)

V III CODES OF LAW

The *Mānava Dharma Sāstra* (Law Book of Manu) has attracted attention ever since it was rendered into English by Sir W Jones. His Hindu friends assured him that it was the basis of all sacred law in India, having been dictated by a divine being, Manu, at the creation of the world. It is now held to be a late redaction of the usages of a particular gens, or clan, the Manavas. Its date has been, and still is, matter of high dispute. Sir William Jones believed it might be as ancient as 1280 years B.C. The late Dr Burnell contended that, even in its original form, it was not composed before 400 A.D. The date we have assigned (p. 82) may provisionally be accepted as more probable than either of these extremes.

As to the mode in which law was developed in India, Sir H Sumner Maine compares it to what would have happened in Western Europe if the Canonists had gained a complete ascendancy over common lawyers and civilians. In that case, Western law would have been ‘deeply tinged in all its parts with ecclesiastical ideas,’ as all Hindu legislation is.²

¹ Chāndogya Upanishad, Prapāthaka 6, Khanda 2 (see *Sacred Books of the East* Upanishads, Part I)

² *Early Law and Custom*, p. 44

We have referred to the two great codes of Manu and of Yajñavalkya. There is another code but later and of less importance—that ascribed to Parīśara.

VI VIRODHA BHAKTI

One of the most singular modes of dealing with the gods is what is called *Virodha bhakti*—literally antagonistic worship. The deity is reviled, defied, or it may be beaten. He is thus either compelled to grant the worshipper (1) his request, or else he is provoked and destroys the daring wretch. In the latter case the votary is absorbed into deity, or at all events is translated to heaven.

I am not sure whether we can bring under this head the not unfrequent habit of ridiculing the gods. In Western India the following satire on the awkward figure of Ganesa is well known—

Poor Ganapati bewail his rat
Borne off by vile felonious cat
My legs are short how can I trudge?
And how shall this big belly budge?

Ganapati or Ganesa it must be noted usually rides on a rat. He has an elephant's head, an immense belly, and short legs. And this is the god whom the poet Campbell has styled Ganesa sublime.

VII MODERN BRAHMANICAL WORSHIP

This ritual has become in the lapse of ages immensely complicated. A full description would be intolerably tedious. The following statements will suffice.

We speak first of worship in the temple. In the case of the god Siva the rites are as follows—

The Brahman first bathes, then enters the temple and how to the god. He anoints the image with clarified butter or boiled oil, pours pure water over it, and then wipes it dry. He girds some white powder round it with water, dips the ends of his three forefingers in it, and draws them across the image. He sits down, meditates, places rice and *durva* grass on the image—places a flower on his own head, and then on the top of the image, then another flower on the image, and another and another—accomplishing each act with the recitation of sacred spell, places white powder flowers, *tilot* leaves, incense, meat, offring, rice, plantain, and a lamp before the image, repeats the name of Siva, then prostrates himself before the image. In the evening he retires, washes his feet, prostrates himself before the door, puts the door, places a lamp within, offers milk, sweetmeat, and fruits to the image, prostrates himself before it, locks the door, and departs.

Very similar is the worship paid to Vishnu—

The priest bathes, and then awakes the sleeping god by blowing a shell and ringing a bell. More abundant offerings are made than to Shiva. About noon fruits, roots, sorted peas, sweetmeat, &c. are presented. Then later, boiled rice, fried herbs and spices, but no flesh, fish, nor fowl. After dinner, betel nut. The god is then left to sleep and the temple is shut up for some hours. Towards evening cards, latten sweetmeats, fruits are presented. At sunset a lamp is brought, and fresh offerings made. Lights are waved before the image, a small bell is rung, water is presented for washing the mouth, face, and feet—with a towel to dry them. In a few minutes the offerings and the lamp are removed and the god is left to sleep in the dark.¹

The prescribed worship is not always fully performed. Still, sixteen things are essential, of which the following are the most important—

1st. Preparing a seat for the god, invoking his presence, bathing the image, clothing it, putting the string round it, offering perfumes, flowers, incense, lamps, offerings of fruits and prepared eatables, betel nut, prayers, circumambulation. An ordinary worshipper presents some of the offerings, mutters a short prayer or two, when circumambulating the image, the rest being done by the priest.

We give one additional specimen of the ritual—

As an atonement for unwarily eating or drinking what is forbidden eight hundred repetitions of the Gauri prayer should be preceded by three suppressions of the breath, water being touched during the recital of the following text: 'The bull roars, he has four horns, three feet, two heads, seven hands, and is bound by a three fold cord, he is the mighty, resplendent being, and pervades mortal men.'²

The 'bull' is understood to be justice personified.

All Brahmanical ceremonies exhibit, we may say, ritualism and symbolism run mad.

The prescribed forms of worship out of the temple are equally minute. We extract a few things from the very lengthened statement by Colebrooke.

On rising, the Brahman rubs his teeth with a twig of a particular fig-tree, praying. If no proper twig be procurable, he rinses his mouth twelve times with water. He then bathes, in a river if possible. He sips water, sprinkles some water before him, utters three prescribed prayers, throws water eight times on his head, or towards the sky, and concludes by throwing water on the ground to destroy demons. He

¹ We have condensed this statement from Ward. The description applies chiefly to Bengal.

² So writes Van Kennedy, a good authority. The rites, however, vary somewhat in different places.

Asiatic Researches, v. 356

plunges thrice in the stream repeating sacred texts washes his mantle puts it on and sits down to worship the rising sun. He ties the lock of hair on the crown of his head recites the Gayatri prayer holding much *Lusa* grass in his left and three blades of it in his right hand or wearing a ring of it on the third finger of the right. He then sips water repeating the Gayatri each time rubbing his hands as if with them finally touching with his wet hand his feet his breast eyes ears nose and navel. If he happens to sneeze or spit he must touch his right ear for with the legislator Parasara fire water the Veda the sun moon and all reside in the right ear of Brahmins. Impurity is removed by the touch. He closes his eyes and meditates on Brahma Vishnu and Shiva. He then meditates the Gayatri during three superincursions of breath. Closing the left nostril with the two longest fingers of his right hand he breathes through the right nostril. Then closing likewise that nostril with his thumb he holds his breath while he meditates the Gayatri then he removes both fingers from the left nostril and emits the breath he had apprehended. He sips water and prays throws a leaf or water eight times on his head or toward the sky and once on the ground and prays. He fills the palm of his hand with water holds it to his nose draws in the fluid yore nostril retains it for some time then expels it by the other nostril towards the north east. *Srigayatri* and *prayer*. Worships the sun standing on his feet resting the other against his ankle and heel and looking toward the east. The Gayatri is invoked and then it is audibly uttered a hundred or a thousand times the repetitions being counted on a rosary &c &c &c.

We really must praise both for the reader's sake and our own but the description of the morning worship is only half finished.

It will afford room for earnest reflection to note that an intellectual race like the Brahmans should have prescribed and largely practised observances so utterly childish and fantastic deeming them worship acceptable to Heaven.

VIII THE BRAHMO SOMAY

The more recent accounts of the Brahmo Somay do not indicate any approximation towards each other of the three parties into which it is divided. Mr Mozumdar said

Most unfortunately there is so much personal rancour such exclusiveness and embittered party feeling still in them all that I see as little hope of future harmony and progress in one as in the others. He adds I will for that reason have no Somay of my own. We fear the old bitterness remains.

IX SPECIMENS OF THE BETTER TEACHINGS OF HINDUISM

It may be well—indeed it is only just—to give some additional specimens of the higher precepts and maxims that are found in Hindu books. They occur both in the Sanskrit and vernacular writings. We come upon them with a feeling of surprise, as being entirely contrary to the general spirit of the religion.

Thus, nothing can be in more direct opposition to the rules regarding Caste than the following *Shloka*—

Who at thy gate for shelter makes request,
High though thy rank, and low the lowest be,
Let him receive full hospitality—
Believe me, all the gods are in a guest —*Hitopadesa*, i 65

It is singular that this verse is omitted in the last Bombay edition. Was it too startling for the Brahmins?

We have said that superstition rules in India with iron sway, omens, lucky and unlucky days are thought of perpetually. Yet the Marathi poet Tukaram says this—

Pronounce the name of Vitthal,
Then forward thrust thy foot!
All lucky seasons and signs are thine
If the thought of Vitthal be in thy heart

Substitute *God* for *Vitthal*, and the sentiment is quite Christian.

Dr John Muir and Sir Monier M. Williams have supplied us with translations of many striking sayings. We borrow the following from Dr Muir.

Let no man do to another that which would be repugnant to himself: this is the sum of righteousness, the rest is according to inclination — *Mahābhārata*, viii 5571

O king, thou seest the faults of others, though only as large as mustard seeds, but seeing, thou seest not thine own, though of the bulk of *bileva* fruits — *Ibid* i 3069

The carrying of the triple staff, silence, a load of matted locks, a shaven head, a garb of bark or skins, religious observances, oblations, the agnihotra offering, abode in a forest, the drying up of the body—all these things are false, if the disposition be not pure — *Ibid* iii 13 115

Constructing the ship of self command, cross over the river whose waters are the five senses, and cross over lust, anger, and death, and the evils of the world — *Ibid* vii 12,060

The soul itself is its own witness, the soul itself is its own refuge, offend not thy conscious soul, the supreme internal witness of men — *Mam*, viii 84

Even here below an unjust man attains no happiness — *Ibid* ix 170

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